

*The*  
**G.K.C.**  
**CALENDAR**

*A Quotation from  
the Works of  
G.K.  
CHESTERTON  
for every  
day in the  
Year.*



*London: Cecil Palmer*



H. Scamell

Dunington

Christmas '42

The  
G. K. Chesterton  
Calendar

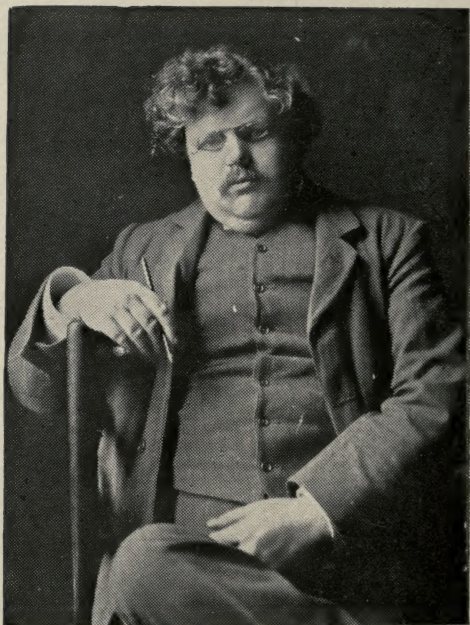
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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

*Others in Preparation*





*Photo]*

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G. K. CHESTERTON

# The G. K. Chesterton Calendar

A QUOTATION FROM THE WORKS OF  
G. K. CHESTERTON  
FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR  
SELECTED BY CECIL PALMER



LONDON: CECIL PALMER  
OAKLEY HOUSE, BLOOMSBURY STREET

TO  
TWO ENTHUSIASTIC "CHESTERTONIANS"  
HELEN CASH  
AND  
R. DIMSDALE STOCKER  
THIS LITTLE COMPILATION IS  
JOYFULLY DEDICATED

SECOND  
EDITION

1 9 2 1

## PREFACE

I WISH to record my sincere acknowledgment to the following publishers, from whose books have been taken many of the quotations in the following pages:—

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My warmest thanks are also due to Mr. G. K. Chesterton for the kind permission he gave me both to compile and publish this volume.

C. P.



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# January

## One

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose; new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes. Unless a particular man made New Year resolutions, he would make no resolutions. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective. Unless a man starts on the strange assumption that he has never existed before, it is quite certain that he will never exist afterwards. Unless a man be born again, he shall by no means enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

## Two

God made the wicked Grocer  
For a mystery and a sign,  
That men might shun the awful shops  
And go to inns to dine;  
Where the bacon's on the rafter  
And the wine is in the wood,  
And God that made good laughter  
Has seen that they are good.

The evil-hearted Grocer  
Would call his mother "Ma'am,"  
And bow at her and bob at her,  
Her aged soul to damn,  
And rub his horrid hands and ask  
What article was next,  
Though *mortis in articulo*  
Should be her proper text.

## Three

His props are not his children,  
But pert lads underpaid,  
Who call out "Cash!" and bang about  
To work his wicked trade;

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## JANUARY

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He keeps a lady in a cage  
Most cruelly all day,  
And makes her count and calls her "Miss"  
Until she fades away.

The righteous minds of innkeepers  
Induce them now and then  
To crack a bottle with a friend  
Or treat unmoneyed men,  
But who hath seen the Grocer  
Treat housemaids to his teas  
Or crack a bottle of fish-sauce  
Or stand a man a cheese ?

### *Four*

He sells us sands of Araby  
As sugar for cash down;  
He sweeps his shop and sells the dust  
The purest salt in town,  
He crams with cans of poisoned meat  
Poor subjects of the King,  
And when they die by thousands  
Why, he laughs like anything.

The wicked Grocer groces  
In spirits and in wine,  
Not frankly and in fellowship  
As men in inns do dine;  
But packed with soap and sardines  
And carried off by grooms,  
For to be snatched by Duchesses  
And drunk in dressing-rooms.

### *Five*

The hell-instructed Grocer  
Has a temple made of tin,  
And the ruin of good innkeepers  
Is loudly urged therein;  
But now the sands are running out  
From sugar of a sort,  
The Grocer trembles; for his time,  
Just like his weight, is short.

### *Six*

There are only two ways of governing: by a rule and by a ruler. And it is seriously true to say of a woman, in education and domesticity, that the freedom of the autocrat appears to be necessary to her. She is never responsible until she is irresponsible. In case this sounds like an idle contradiction, I confidently appeal to the cold facts of history. Almost every despotic or oligarchic state has admitted women to its privileges. Scarcely one democratic state has ever admitted them to its rights.

### *Seven*

An element of paradox runs through the whole of existence itself. It begins in the realm of ultimate physics and metaphysics, in the two facts that we cannot imagine a space that is infinite, and that we cannot imagine a space that is finite. It runs through the inmost complications of divinity, in that we cannot conceive that Christ in the wilderness was truly pure, unless we also conceive that he desired to sin. It runs, in the same manner, through all the minor matters of morals, so that we cannot imagine courage existing except in conjunction with fear, or magnanimity existing except in conjunction with some temptation to meanness.

### *Eight*

Asceticism is a thing which in its very nature we tend in these days to misunderstand. Asceticism, in the religious sense, is the repudiation of the great mass of human joys because of the supreme joyfulness of the one joy, the religious joy. But asceticism is not in the least confined to religious asceticism: there is scientific asceticism which asserts that truth is alone satisfying: there is æsthetic asceticism which asserts that art is alone satisfying: there is amatory asceticism which asserts that love is alone satisfying. There is even epicurean asceticism, which asserts that beer and skittles are alone satisfying. Wherever the manner of praising anything involves the statement that the speaker could live with that thing alone, there lies the germ and essence of asceticism.

*Nine*

The Puritans fell, through the damning fact that they had a complete theory of life, through the eternal paradox that a satisfactory explanation can never satisfy. Like Brutus and the logical Romans, like the logical French Jacobins, like the logical English utilitarians, they taught the lesson that men's wants have always been right and their arguments always wrong. Reason is always a kind of brute force; those who appeal to the head rather than the heart, however pallid and polite, are necessarily men of violence. We speak of "touching" a man's heart, but we can do nothing to his head but hit it. The tyranny of the Puritans over the bodies of men was comparatively a trifle; pikes, bullets, and conflagrations are comparatively a trifle. Their real tyranny was the tyranny of aggressive reason over the cowed and demoralised human spirit. Their brooding and raving can be forgiven, can in truth be loved and revered, for it is humanity on fire; hatred can be genial, madness can be homely. The Puritans fell, not because they were fanatics, but because they were rationalists.

*Ten*

A great deal is said in these days about the value or valuelessness of logic. In the main, indeed, logic is not a productive tool so much as a weapon for defence. A man building up an intellectual system has to build like Nehemiah, with the sword in one hand and the trowel in the other. The imagination, the constructive quality, is the trowel, and argument is the sword. A wide experience of actual intellectual affairs will lead most people to the conclusion that logic is mainly valuable as a weapon wherewith to exterminate logicians.

*Eleven*

When people say that you can prove anything by logic, they are not using words in a fair sense. What they mean is that you can prove anything by bad logic. Deep in the mystic ingratitude of the soul of man there is an extraordinary tendency to use the name for an organ, when what is meant is the abuse or decay of that organ. Thus we speak of a man suffering from "nerves," which

is about as sensible as talking about a man suffering from ten fingers. We speak of "liver" and "digestion" when we mean the failure of liver and the absence of digestion. And in the same manner we speak of the dangers of logic, when what we really mean is the danger of fallacy.

*Twelve*

The simplicity towards which the world is driving is the necessary outcome of all our systems and speculations and of our deep and continuous contemplation of things. For the universe is like everything in it; we have to look at it repeatedly and habitually before we see it. It is only when we have seen it for the hundredth time that we see it for the first time. The more consistently things are contemplated, the more they tend to unify themselves and therefore to simplify themselves. The simplification of anything is always sensational. Thus monotheism is the most sensational of things: it is as if we gazed long at a design full of disconnected objects, and, suddenly, with a stunning thrill, they came together into a huge and staring face.

*Thirteen*

Savonarola addressed himself to the hardest of all earthly tasks, that of making men turn back and wonder at the simplicities they had learnt to ignore. It is strange that the most unpopular of all doctrines is the doctrine which declares the common life divine. Democracy, of which Savonarola was so fiery an exponent, is the hardest of gospels; there is nothing that so terrifies men as the decree that they are all kings. Christianity, in Savonarola's mind, identical with democracy, is the hardest of gospels; there is nothing that so strikes men with fear as the saying that they are all the sons of God.

*Fourteen*

It is said that Scott is neglected by modern readers; if so, the matter could be more appropriately described by saying that modern readers are neglected by Providence. The ground of this neglect, in so far as it exists, must be found, I suppose, in the general sentiment that, like

the beard of Polonius, he is too long. Yet it is surely a peculiar thing that in literature alone a house should be despised because it is too large, or a host impugned because he is too generous. If romance be really a pleasure, it is difficult to understand the modern reader's consuming desire to get it over, and if it be not a pleasure, it is difficult to understand his desire to have it at all.

*Fifteen*

No genuine criticism of romance will ever arise until we have grasped the fact that romance lies not upon the outside of life but absolutely in the centre of it.

*Sixteen*

Romance, indeed, does not consist by any means so much in experiencing adventures as in being ready for them. How little the actual boy cares for incidents in comparison to tools and weapons may be tested by the fact that the most popular story of adventure is concerned with a man who lived for years on a desert island with two guns and a sword, which he never had to use on an enemy.

*Seventeen*

This is a truth little understood in our time, but a very essential one. If optimism means a general approval, it is certainly true that the more a man becomes an optimist the more he becomes a melancholy man. If he manages to praise everything, his praise will develop an alarming resemblance to a polite boredom. He will say that the marsh is as good as the garden; he will mean that the garden is as dull as the marsh. He may force himself to say that emptiness is good, but he will hardly prevent himself from asking what is the good of such good. This optimism does exist—this optimism which is more hopeless than pessimism—this optimism which is the very heart of hell. Against such an aching vacuum of joyless approval there is only one antidote—a sudden and pugnacious belief in positive evil. This world can be made beautiful again by beholding it as a battlefield. When we have defined and isolated the evil thing, the colours come back into everything else. When evil things have become evil, good things, in a blazing apocalypse, become good.

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## JANUARY

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### *Eighteen*

There are some men who are dreary because they do not believe in God; but there are many others who are dreary because they do not believe in the devil. The grass grows green again when we believe in the devil, the roses grow red again when we believe in the devil.

### *Nineteen*

The very word "superficial" is founded on a fundamental mistake about life, the idea that second thoughts are best. The superficial impression of the world is by far the deepest. What we really feel, naturally and casually, about the look of skies and trees and the face of friends, that and that alone will almost certainly remain our vital philosophy to our dying day.

### *Twenty*

An appreciation of Scott might be made almost a test of decadence. If ever we lose touch with this one most reckless and defective writer, it will be a proof to us that we have erected round ourselves a false cosmos, a world of lying and horrible perfection, leaving outside of it Walter Scott and that strange old world which is as confused and as indefensible and as inspiring and as healthy as he.

### *Twenty-one*

It is always impossible to define the instant and the turn of mood which makes the whole difference between danger being worse than endurance and endurance being worse than danger. The actual outbreak generally has a symbolic or artistic, or what some would call whimsical, cause. Somebody fires off a pistol, or appears in an unpopular uniform, or refers in a loud voice to a scandal that is never mentioned in the newspapers; somebody takes off his hat, or somebody doesn't take off his hat; and a city is sacked before midnight.

### *Twenty-two*

The greatest disaster of the nineteenth century was this: that men began to use the word "spiritual" as the same as the word "good." They thought that to grow in

refinement and incorporeality was to grow in virtue. When scientific evolution was announced, some feared that it would encourage mere animality. It did worse: it encouraged mere spirituality. It taught men to think that so long as they were passing from the ape they were going to the angel. But you can pass from the ape and go to the devil.

### *Twenty-three*

We have all read in scientific books, and, indeed, in all romances, the story of the man who has forgotten his name. This man walks about the streets and can see and appreciate everything; only he cannot remember who he is. Well, every man is that man in the story. Every man has forgotten who he is. One may understand the cosmos, but never the ego; the self is more distant than any star. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; but thou shalt not know thyself. We are all under the same mental calamity; we have all forgotten our names. We have all forgotten what we really are. All that we call common-sense and rationality and practicality and positivism only means that for certain dead levels of our life we forget that we have forgotten. All that we call spirit and art and ecstasy only means that for one awful instant we remember that we forget.

### *Twenty-four*

Mental and emotional liberty are not so simple as they look. Really they require almost as careful a balance of laws and conditions as do social and political liberty. The ordinary æsthetic anarchist who sets out to feel everything freely gets knotted at last in a paradox that prevents him feeling at all. He breaks away from home limits to follow poetry. But in ceasing to feel home limits he has ceased to feel the *Odyssey*. He is free from national prejudices and outside patriotism. But being outside patriotism he is outside *Henry V*. Such a literary man is simply outside all literature: he is more of a prisoner than any bigot. For if there is a wall between you and the world, it makes little difference whether you describe yourself as locked in or as locked out.

*Twenty-five*

As we have taken the circle as the symbol of reason and madness, we may very well take the cross as the symbol at once of mystery and of health. Buddhism is centripetal, but Christianity is centrifugal: it breaks out. For the circle is perfect and infinite in its nature; but it is fixed for ever in its size; it can never be larger or smaller. But the cross, though it has at its heart a collision and contradiction, can extend its four arms for ever without altering its shape. Because it has a paradox in its centre it can grow without changing. The circle returns upon itself and is bound. The cross opens its arms to the four winds; it is a sign-post for free travellers.

*Twenty-six*

A city is, properly speaking, more poetic even than the country-side, for while nature is a chaos of unconscious forces, a city is a chaos of conscious ones. The crest of the flower or the pattern of the lichen may or may not be significant symbols. But there is no stone in the street and no brick in the wall that is not actually a deliberate symbol—a message from some man, as much as if it were a telegram or a post card.

*Twenty-seven*

The two facts which attract almost every normal person to children are, first, that they are very serious, and, secondly, that they are in consequence very happy. They are jolly with the completeness which is possible only in the absence of humour. The most unfathomable schools and sages have never attained to the gravity which dwells in the eyes of a baby of three months old.

It is the gravity of astonishment at the universe, and astonishment at the universe is not mysticism, but a transcendent common-sense.

*Twenty-eight*

Nothing sublimely artistic has ever arisen out of mere art, any more than anything essentially reasonable has arisen out of pure reason.

There must always be a rich moral soil for any great æsthetic growth. The principle of *art for art's sake* is a

very good principle if it means that there is a vital distinction between the earth and the tree that has its root in the earth; but it is a very bad principle if it means that the tree could grow just as well with its roots in the air.

### *Twenty-nine*

Modern criticism, like all weak things, is overloaded with words. In a healthy condition of language a man finds it very difficult to say the right thing, but at last says it. In this empire of journalese a man finds it so very easy to say the wrong thing that he never thinks of saying anything else. False or meaningless phrases lie so ready to his hand that it is easier to use them than not to use them.

These wrong terms picked up through idleness are retained through habit, and so the man has begun to think wrong almost before he has begun to think at all.

### *Thirty*

I felt in my bones; first, that this world does not explain itself. It may be a miracle with a supernatural explanation; it may be a conjuring trick, with a natural explanation. But the explanation of the conjuring trick, if it is to satisfy me, will have to be better than the natural explanations I have heard. The thing is magic, true or false. Second, I came to feel as if magic must have a meaning; and meaning must have someone to mean it. There was something personal in the world, as in a work of art; whatever it meant it meant violently. Third, I thought this purpose beautiful in its old design, in spite of its defects, such as dragons. Fourth, that the proper form of thanks to it is some form of humility and restraint: we should thank God for beer and Burgundy by not drinking too much of them. We owed, also, an obedience to whatever made us. And last, and strangest, there had come into my mind a vague and vast impression that in some way all good was a remnant to be stored and held sacred out of some primordial ruin. Man had saved his good as Crusoe saved his goods: he had saved them from a wreck. All this I felt and the age gave me no encouragement to feel it. And all this time I had not even thought of Christian theology.

*Thirty-one*

It is absurd indeed that Christians should be called the enemies of life because they wish life to last for ever; it is more absurd still to call the old comic writers dull because they wished their unchanging characters to last for ever. Both popular religion with its endless joys, and the old comic story, with its endless jokes, have in our time faded together. We are too weak to desire that undying vigour. We believe that you can have too much of a good thing—a blasphemous belief, which at one blow wrecks all the heavens that men have hoped for. The grand old defiers of God were not afraid of an eternity of torment. We have come to be afraid of an eternity of joy.

# February

## *One*

Master of arts and master of arms, master of all things yet,  
For the musket as for the mandolin the master fingers  
fret;

The news to the noise of the mandolin that all the world  
comes home,

And the young are young and the years return and the  
days of the kingdom come

When the wars wearied, and the tribes turned; and the  
sun rose on Rome,

And all that Rome remembers when all her realms forget.

## *Two*

The kings came over the olden Rhine to break an ancient  
debt,

We took their rush at the river of death in the fields where  
first we met,

But we marked their millions swaying; then we marked  
a standard fall;

And far beyond them, like a bird, Manoury's bugle call:

And there were not kings or debts or doubts or anything  
at all

But the People that remembers and the peoples that forget.

## *Three*

We, the modern English, cannot easily understand the  
French Revolution, because we cannot easily understand  
the idea of bloody battle for pure common-sense; we  
cannot understand common-sense in arms and conquering.  
In modern England common-sense seems to mean putting  
up with existing conditions. For us a practical politician  
really means a man who can be thoroughly trusted to do  
nothing at all; that is where he practically comes in. The  
French feeling—the feeling at the back of the Revolution—  
was that the more sensible a man was, the more you must  
look out for slaughter.

*Four*

The pessimists who attack the universe are always under this disadvantage. They have an exhilarating consciousness that they could make the sun and moon better; but they also have the depressing consciousness that they could not make the sun and moon at all. A man looking at a hippopotamus may sometimes be tempted to regard a hippopotamus as an enormous mistake; but he is also bound to confess that a fortunate inferiority prevents him personally from making such mistakes.

*Five*

This world is not to be justified as it is justified by the mechanical optimists; it is not to be justified as the best of all possible worlds. Its merit is not that it is orderly and explicable; its merit is that it is wild and utterly unexplained. Its merit is precisely that none of us could have conceived such a thing, that we should have rejected the bare idea of it as miracle and unreason. It is the best of all impossible worlds.

*Six*

Blessings there are of cradle and of clan,  
Blessings that fall of priests' and princes' hands;  
But never blessing full of lives and lands,  
Broad as the blessing of a lonely man.

*Seven*

For the worst and most dangerous hypocrite is not he who affects unpopular virtue, but he who affects popular vice. The jolly fellow of the saloon bar and the race-course is the real deceiver of mankind; he has misled more than any false prophet, and his victims cry to him out of hell.

*Eight*

It is a deadly error (an error at the back of much of the false placidity of our politics) to suppose that lies are told with excess and luxuriance, and truths told with modesty and restraint. Some of the most frantic lies on the face of life are told with modesty and restraint; for the simple

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## FEBRUARY

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reason that only modesty and restraint will save them. Many official declarations are just as dignified as Mr Dombey, because they are just as fictitious.

### *Nine*

If the barricades went up in our streets and the poor became masters, I think the priests would escape, I fear the gentlemen would; but I believe the gutters would be simply running with the blood of philanthropists.

### *Ten*

The man who said that an Englishman's house is his castle said much more than he meant. The Englishman thinks of his house as something fortified, and provisioned, and his very surliness is at root romantic. And this sense would naturally be strongest on wild winter nights, when the lowered portcullis and the lifted drawbridge do not merely bar people out but bar people in. The Englishman's house is most sacred, not merely when the King cannot enter it, but when the Englishman cannot get out of it.

### *Eleven*

Why should I care for the Ages  
Because they are old and grey;  
To me, like sudden laughter,  
The stars are fresh and gay;  
The world is a daring fancy,  
And finished yesterday.

### *Twelve*

Anyhow, there is this about such evil, that it opens door after door in hell, and always into smaller and smaller chambers. This is the real case against crime, that a man does not become wilder and wilder, but only meaner and meaner.

### *Thirteen*

"Where does a wise man hide a leaf? In the forest.  
But what does he do if there is no forest?"  
"Well, well," cried Flambeau irritably, "what does he do?"

"He grows a forest to hide it in," said the priest in an obscure voice. "A fearful sin."

*Fourteen*

After the first silence the small man said to the other:

"Where does a wise man hide a pebble?"

And the tall man answered in a low voice: "On the beach."

The small man nodded, and after a short silence said:

"Where does a wise man hide a leaf?"

And the other answered: "In the forest."

There was another stillness, and then the tall man resumed: "Do you mean that when a wise man has to hide a real diamond he has been known to hide it among sham ones?"

"No, no," said the little man with a laugh, "we will let bygones be bygones."

*Fifteen*

When will people understand that it is useless for a man to read his Bible unless he also reads everybody else's Bible? A printer reads a Bible for misprints. A Mormon reads his Bible, and finds polygamy; a Christian Scientist reads his, and finds we have no arms and legs.

*Sixteen*

A machine only *is* a machine because it cannot think.

*Seventeen*

I have always noticed that people who begin by taking the intellect very seriously end up by having no intellects at all. The idolater worships wood and stone; and if he worships his own head it turns into wood and stone.

*Eighteen*

The evil of aristocracy is not that it necessarily leads to the infliction of bad things or the suffering of sad ones; the evil of aristocracy is that it places everything in the hands of a class of people who can always inflict what they can never suffer.

*Nineteen*

A man cannot have the energy to produce good art without having the energy to wish to pass beyond it. A small artist is content with art; a great artist is content with nothing except everything.

*Twenty*

Bigotry may be roughly defined as the anger of men who have no opinions.

*Twenty-one*

Truths turn into dogmas the instant that they are disputed. Thus every man who utters a doubt defines a religion. And the scepticism of our time does not really destroy the beliefs, rather it creates them; gives them their limits and their plain and defiant shape.

*Twenty-two*

"Do you know, Hump," he said, "I think modern people have somehow got their minds all wrong about human life. They seem to expect what Nature has never promised; and then try to ruin all that Nature has really given."

*Twenty-three*

There is no great harm in the theorist who makes up a new theory to fit a new event. But the theorist who starts with a false theory and then sees everything as making it come true is the most dangerous enemy of human reason.

*Twenty-four*

There are crowds who do not care to revolt; but there are no crowds who do not like someone else to do it for them; a fact which the safest oligarchs may be wise to learn.

*Twenty-five*

It is one of the tragedies of the diplomat that they are not allowed to admit either knowledge or ignorance.

*Twenty-six*

Lady, the light is dying in the skies,  
Lady, and let us die when honour dies;  
Your dear, dropped glove was like a gauntlet flung  
    When you and I were young,  
For something more than splendour stood; and ease was  
    not the only good,  
About the woods in Ivywood, when you and I were young.

*Twenty-seven*

The instant that man has any chance of existence, he  
insists on a jolly existence. He only wishes to be "alive"  
in order to be lively.

*Twenty-eight*

The pale leaf falls in pallor, but the green leaf turns to  
gold;  
We that have found it good to be young shall find it  
    good to be old;  
Life that bringeth the marriage-bell, the cradle and the  
    grave,  
Life that is mean to the mean of heart, and only brave  
    to the brave.

*Twenty-nine*

The prime function of the imagination is to see our whole  
orderly system of life as a pile of stratified revolutions.  
In spite of all revolutionaries it must be said that the  
function of imagination is not to make strange things settled  
so much as to make settled things strange; not so much  
to make wonders facts as to make facts wonders.

# March

## *One*

But I saw her cheek and forehead  
Change, as at a spoken word,  
And I saw her head uplifted  
Like a lily to the Lord.

Naught is lost, but all transmuted,  
Ears are sealed, yet eyes have seen;  
Saw her smiles (O soul be worthy !),  
Saw her tears (O heart be clean !).

## *Two*

The aim of civil war, like the aim of all war, is peace. Now the Suffragettes cannot raise civil war in this soldierly and decisive sense; first, because they are women; and, secondly, because they are very few women. But they can raise something else; which is altogether another pair of shoes. They do not create revolution; what they do create is anarchy; and the difference between these is not a question of violence, but a question of fruitfulness and finality. Revolution of its nature produces government; anarchy only produces more anarchy.

## *Three*

Humanity never produces optimists till it has ceased to produce happy men.

## *Four*

Thrift is the really romantic thing; economy is more romantic than extravagance.

Heaven knows I for one speak disinterestedly in the matter; for I cannot clearly remember saving a halfpenny ever since I was born. But the thing is true; economy, properly understood, is the more poetic. Thrift is poetic because it is creative; waste is unpoetic because it is waste. It is prosaic to throw money away, because it is prosaic to throw anything away; it is negative; it is a confession

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## MARCH

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of indifference—that is, it is a confession of failure. The most prosaic thing about the house is the dustbin, and the one great objection to the new fastidious and æsthetic homestead is simply that in such a moral *ménage* the dustbin must be bigger than the house.

### Five

It is quite unfair to say that a woman hates other women individually; but I think it would be quite true to say that she detests them in a confused heap. And this is not because she despises her own sex, but because she respects it; and respects especially that sanctity and separation of each item which is represented in manners by the idea of dignity and in morals by the idea of chastity.

### Six

The world will have another washing day;  
The decadents decay; the pedants pall;  
And H. G. Wells has found that children play,  
And Bernard Shaw discovered that they squall;  
Rationalists are growing rational—  
And through thick woods one finds a stream astray.  
So secret that the very sky seems small—  
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

### Seven

Great poets are obscure for two opposite reasons; now because they are talking about something too large for anyone to understand, and now again because they are talking about something too small for anyone to see.

### Eight

Men trust an ordinary man because they trust themselves. But men trust a great man because they do not trust themselves. And hence the worship of great men always appears in times of weakness and cowardice; we never hear of great men until the time when all other men are small.

### Nine

This is the first essential element in government; coercion; a necessary but not a noble element. I may remark in passing that when people say that government rests on force they give an admirable instance of the foggy and

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muddled cynicisms of modernity. Government does not rest on force. Government is force; it rests on consent or a conception of justice. A king or a community holding a certain thing to be abnormal, evil, uses the general strength to crush it out; the strength is his tool, but the belief is his only sanction. You might as well say that glass is the real reason for telescopes. But arising from whatever reason the act of government is coercive and is burdened with all the coarse and painful qualities of coercion.

is a sufficient proof that we are not an essentially democratic state that we are always wondering what we shall do with the poor. If we were democrats, we should be wondering what the poor will do with us.

### *Eleven*

"People like frequent laughter," answered Father Brown, "but I don't think they like a permanent smile. Cheerfulness without humour is a very trying thing."

### *Twelve*

It is something to have wept as we have wept,  
It is something to have done as we have done,  
It is something to have watched when all men slept,  
And seen the stars which never see the sun.

### *Thirteen*

But in this grey morn of man's life  
Cometh sometime to the mind  
A little light that leaps and flies,  
Like a star blown on the wind.

A star of nowhere, a nameless star,  
A light that spins and swirls,  
And cries that even in hedge and hill,  
Even on earth, it may go ill  
At last with the evil earls.

### *Fourteen*

The honest poor can sometimes forget poverty. The honest rich can never forget it.

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### *Fifteen*

A great classic means a man whom one can praise without having read.

### *Sixteen*

His harp was carved and cunning,  
His sword prompt and sharp,  
And he was gay when he held the sword,  
Sad when he held the harp.

For the great Gaels of Ireland  
Are the men that God made mad,  
For all their wars are many,  
And all their songs are sad.

### *Seventeen*

Pride juggles with her toppling towers,  
They strike the sun and cease,  
But the firm feet of humility  
They grip the ground like trees.

### *Eighteen*

Right is right, even if nobody does it. Wrong is wrong,  
even if everybody is wrong about it.

### *Nineteen*

An adventure is only an inconvenience rightly considered.  
An inconvenience is only an adventure wrongly considered.

### *Twenty*

The two things that a healthy person hates most between  
heaven and hell are a woman who is not dignified and a  
man who is.

### *Twenty-one*

One of the great disadvantages of hurry is that it takes such  
a long time.

### *Twenty-two*

A joke is a fact. However indefensible it is it cannot be  
attacked. However defensible it is it cannot be defended.

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### *Twenty-three*

His soul will never starve for exploits and excitements who is wise enough to be made a fool of. He will make himself happy in the traps that have been laid for him; he will roll in their nets and sleep. All doors will fly open to him who has a mildness more defiant than mere courage. The whole is unerringly expressed in one fortunate phrase—he will be always “taken in.” To be taken in everywhere is to see the inside of everything. It is the hospitality of circumstance. With torches and trumpets, like a guest, the greenhorn is taken in by life. And the sceptic is cast out by it.

### *Twenty-four*

Few of us understand the street. Even when we step into it as into a house or room of strangers. Few of us see through the shining riddle of the street, the strange folk who belong to the street only—the street walker or the street arab, the nomads who, generation after generation, have kept their ancient secrets in the full blaze of the sun. Of the street at night many of us know even less. The street at night is a great house locked up.

### *Twenty-five*

A socialist means a man who thinks a walking-stick like an umbrella because they both go into the umbrella-stand.

### *Twenty-six*

When a man first tells the truth the first truth he tells is that he himself is a liar.

### *Twenty-seven*

It is always the humble man who talks too much; the proud man watches himself too closely.

### *Twenty-eight*

The promise, like the wheel, is unknown in Nature and is the first mark of man. Referring only to human civilisation, it may be said with seriousness that in the beginning was the Word. The vow is to the man what

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the song is to the bird or the bark to the dog; his voice whereby he is known. Just as a man who cannot keep an appointment is not even fit to fight a duel, so the man who cannot keep an appointment with himself is not sane enough even for suicide. It is not easy to mention anything on which the enormous apparatus of human life can be said to depend. But if it depends on anything, it is on this frail cord, flung from the forgotten hills of yesterday to the invisible mountains of to-morrow.

### *Twenty-nine*

Sorrow and pessimism are indeed, in a sense, opposite things, since sorrow is founded on the value of something and pessimism upon the value of nothing. And in practice we find that those poets or political leaders who come from the people, and whose experiences have really been searching and cruel, are the most sanguine people in the world. These men out of the old agony are always optimists; they are sometimes offensive optimists.

### *Thirty*

The great man will come when all of us are feeling great, not when all of us are feeling small. He will ride in at some splendid moment when we all feel that we could do without him.

### *Thirty-one*

Smile at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget.  
For we are the people of England, that never has spoken yet.

There is many a fat farmer that drinks less cheerfully,  
There is many a free French peasant who is richer and sadder than we.

There are no folk in the whole world so helpless or so wise.  
There is hunger in our bellies, there is laughter in our eyes;

You laugh at us and love us, both mugs and eyes are wet:  
Only you do not know us. For we have not spoken yet.

# April

## *One*

I have never been able to understand where people got the idea that democracy was in some way opposed to tradition. It is obvious that tradition is only democracy extended through time.

## *Two*

It is idle to talk always of the alternative of reason and faith. Reason is itself a matter of faith. It is an act of faith to assert that our thoughts have any relation to reality at all.

## *Three*

The love of a hero is more terrible than the hatred of a tyrant. The hatred of a hero is more generous than the love of a philanthropist.

## *Four*

No; the vision is always solid and reliable. The vision is always a fact. It is the reality that is often a fraud.

## *Five*

To preach anything is to give it away. First, the egoist calls life a war without mercy, and then he takes the greatest possible trouble to drill his enemies in war. To preach egoism is to practise altruism.

## *Six*

If a man prefers nothing I can give him nothing.

## *Seven*

He who wills to reject nothing, wills the destruction of will; for will is not only the choice of something, but the rejection of almost everything.

## *Eight*

The man who cannot believe his senses, and the man who cannot believe anything else, are both insane, but their

insanity is proved not by any error in their argument, but by the manifest mistake of their whole lives. They have both locked themselves up in two boxes, painted inside with the sun and stars; they are both unable to get out, the one into the health and happiness of heaven, the other even into the health and happiness of the earth.

*Nine*

There is a sceptic far more terrible than he who believes that everything began in matter. It is possible to meet the sceptic who believes that everything began in himself.

*Ten*

To accept everything is an exercise, to understand everything a strain. The poet only desires exaltations and expansion, a world to stretch himself in. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits.

*Eleven*

The madman is not the man who has lost his reason. The madman is the man who has lost everything except his reason.

*Twelve*

Oddities only strike ordinary people. Oddities do not strike odd people. This is why ordinary people have a much more exciting time; while odd people are always complaining of the dullness of life.

*Thirteen*

When we say that a man shall not live in a pigsty because he is not a pig, we do not mean that when he lives in a cottage he must be nothing but a cottager. He may regard his cottage as a cottager regards it, but also as a poet regards it, or as a saint regards it. I should say that a man fails in life if the inside of his house is not larger than the outside.

*Fourteen*

I know nothing so contemptible as a mere paradox; a mere ingenious defence of the indefensible.

*Fifteen*

Even a bad shot is dignified when he accepts a duel.

*Sixteen*

Cynicism denotes that condition of mind in which we hold that life is in its nature mean and arid; that no soul contains genuine goodness, and no state of things genuine reliability.

*Seventeen*

It never does a man any very great harm to hate a thing that he knows nothing about. It is the hating of a thing when we do know something about it which corrodes the character. We all have a dark feeling of resistance towards people we have never met, and a profound and manly dislike of the authors we have never read. It does not harm a man to be certain before opening the books that Whitman is an obscene ranter or that Stevenson is a mere trifler with style. It is the man who can think these things after he has read the books who must be in a fair way to mental perdition. Prejudice, in fact, is not so much the great intellectual sin as a thing which we may call, to coin a word, "postjudice," not the bias before the fair trial, but the bias that remains afterwards.

*Eighteen*

And well may God with the serving folk  
Cast in His dreadful lot.  
Is not He too a servant,  
And is not He forgot ?

Wherefore was God in Golgotha  
Slain as a serf is slain;  
And hate He had of prince and peer,  
And love He had and made good cheer,  
Of them that, like this woman here,  
Go powerfully in pain.

*Nineteen*

We talk of art as something artificial in comparison with life. But I sometimes fancy that the very highest art is more real than life itself. At least this is true; that in

proportion as passions become real they become poetical; the lover is always trying to be the poet. All real energy is an attempt at harmony and a high swing of rhythm; and if we were only real enough we should all talk in rhyme.

### *Twenty*

What is the difference between Christ and Satan ?  
It is quite simple. Christ descended into hell; Satan fell into it. One of them wanted to go up and went down; the other wanted to go down and went up.

### *Twenty-one*

William Corbett's seemingly mad language is very literary, so his seemingly mad meaning is very historical. Modern people do not understand him because they do not understand the difference between exaggerating a truth and exaggerating a lie. He did exaggerate, but what he knew, not what he did not know. He only appears paradoxical because he upheld tradition against fashion. A paradox is a fantastic thing that is said once: a fashion is a more fantastic thing that is said a sufficient number of times.

### *Twenty-two*

There are two kinds of men who monopolise conversation. The first kind are those who like the sound of their own voice; the second are those who do not know what the sound of their own voice is like.

### *Twenty-three*

The *Iliad* is only great because all life is a battle, the *Odyssey* because all life is a journey, the Book of Job because all life is a riddle.

### *Twenty-four*

Religion has for centuries been trying to make men exult in the "wonders" of creation, but it has forgotten that a thing cannot be completely wonderful so long as it remains sensible. So long as we regard a tree as an obvious thing, naturally and reasonably created for a giraffe to eat, we

cannot properly wonder at it. It is when we consider it as a prodigious wave of the living soil sprawling up to the skies for no reason in particular that we take off our hats, to the astonishment of the park-keeper.

#### *Twenty-five*

The fanatic is the father of one creed; but the tolerant sceptic is the father of a thousand contradictory creeds. Universalism gives birth to a myriad bigotries.

#### *Twenty-six*

The idea of the Citizen is that his individual human nature shall be constantly and creatively active in *altering* the State. The Germans are right in regarding the idea as dangerously revolutionary. Every Citizen is a revolution. That is, he destroys, devours and adapts his environment to the extent of his own thought and conscience. This is what separates the human social effort from the non-human; the bee creates the honey-comb, but he does not criticise it. The German ruler really does feed and train the German as carefully as a gardener waters a flower. But if the flower suddenly began to water the gardener, he would be much surprised. So in Germany the people really are educated; but in France the people educates. The French not only make up the State, but make the State; not only make it, but remake it. In Germany the ruler is the artist, always painting the happy German like a portrait; in France the Frenchman is the artist, always painting and repainting France like a house. No state of social good that does not mean the Citizen *choosing* good, as well as getting it, has the idea of the Citizen at all.

#### *Twenty-seven*

All that is the matter with the proud is that they will not admit that they are vain.

#### *Twenty-eight*

Free speech is an idea which has at present all the unpopularity of a truism; so that we tend to forget that it was not so very long ago that it had the more practical unpopularity which attaches to a new truth. Ingratitude

is surely the chief of the intellectual sins of man. He takes his political benefits for granted, just as he takes the skies and the seasons for granted. He considers the calm of a city street a thing as inevitable as the calm of a forest clearing, whereas it is only kept in peace by a sustained stretch and effort similar to that which keeps up a battle or a fencing match. Just as we forget where we stand in relation to natural phenomena, so we forget it in relation to social phenomena. We forget that the earth is a star, and we forget that free speech is a paradox.

*Twenty-nine*

Everything that is done in a hurry is certain to be antiquated; that is why modern industrial civilisation bears so curious a resemblance to barbarism.

*Thirty*

Henry James always stood, if ever a man did, for civilisation; for that ordered life in which it is possible to tolerate and to understand. His whole world is made out of sympathy; out of a whole network of sympathies. It is a world of wireless telegraphy for the soul; of a psychological brotherhood of men of which the communications could not be cut. Sometimes this sympathy is almost more terrible than antipathy; and his very delicacies produce a sort of promiscuity of minds. Silence becomes a rending revelation. Short spaces or short speeches become overweighted with the awful worth of human life. Minute unto minute uttereth speech, and instant unto instant showeth knowledge. It is only when we have realised how perfect is the poise of such great human art that we can also realise its peril, and know that any outer thing which cannot make it must of necessity destroy it.

# May

## *One*

It is good to sit where the good tales go,  
To sit as our fathers sat;  
But the hour shall come after his youth,  
When a man shall know not tales but truth,  
And his heart fail thereat.  
When he shall read what is written  
So plain in clouds and clods,  
When he shall hunger without hope  
Even for evil gods.

## *Two*

The optimist is a better reformer than the pessimist; and the man who believes life to be excellent is the man who alters it most. It seems a paradox, yet the reason of it is very plain. The pessimist can be enraged at evil. But only the optimist can be surprised at it.

## *Three*

Much of our modern difficulty, in religion and other things, arises merely from this: that we confuse the word "indefinable" with the word "vague." If someone speaks of a spiritual fact as "indefinable" we promptly picture something misty, a cloud with indeterminate edges. But this is an error even in commonplace logic. The thing that cannot be defined is the first thing; the primary fact. It is our arms, our legs, our pots and pans, that are indefinable. The indefinable is the indisputable. The man next door is indefinable, because he is too actual to be defined. And there are some to whom spiritual things have the same fierce and practical proximity; some to whom God is too actual to be defined.

In the city set upon slime and loam  
They cry in their parliament "Who goes home?"  
And there comes no answer in arch or dome,  
For none in the city of graves goes home.

Yet these shall perish and understand,  
For God has pity on this great land.  
Men that are men again; who goes gone?  
Tocsin and trumpeter: Who goes home?  
For there's blood on the field and blood on the foam  
And blood on the body when Man goes home.  
And a voice valedictory. . . . Who is for Victory?  
Who is for Liberty? Who goes home?

#### *Five*

I was never impressed, even when they were prevalent, by problem plays and problem novels; I always suspected that those who like problems do not like solutions. Endless talk of "social problems" means endless endurance of social wrongs. There was always this air of lingering and evasion, even when people were pretending to be most stringent and audacious. The Free Lovers shilly-shallied much more about getting divorced than a healthy man does about getting married.

#### *Six*

The telescope makes the world smaller; it is only the microscope that makes it larger. Before long the world will be cloven with a way between the telescopists and the microscopists. The first study large things and live in a small world; the second study small things and live in a large world.

#### *Seven*

The opportunist politician is like a man who should abandon billiards because he was beaten at billiards, and abandon golf because he was beaten at golf. There is nothing which is so weak for working purposes as this enormous importance attached to immediate victory. There is nothing that fails like success.

#### *Eight*

Nobody can be progressive without being doctrinal; I might almost say that nobody can be progressive without being infallible—at any rate, without believing in some infallibility. For progress by its very name indicates

a direction; and the moment we are in the least doubtful about the direction, we become in the same degree doubtful about the progress.

### *Nine*

When everything about a people is for the time growing weak and ineffective, it begins to talk about efficiency. So it is that when a man's body is a wreck he begins, for the first time, to talk about health.

### *Ten*

By a strange inversion the political idealist often does not get what he asks for, but does get what he wants. The silent pressure of his ideal lasts much longer and reshapes the world much more than the actualities by which he attempted to suggest it. What perishes is the letter, which he thought so practical. What endures is the spirit, which he felt to be unattainable and even unutterable. It is exactly his schemes that are not fulfilled; it is exactly his vision that is fulfilled.

### *Eleven*

To hear people talk one would think it was some sort of magic chemistry, by which, out of a laborious hotch-potch of hygienic meals, baths, breathing exercises, fresh air and freehand drawing, we can produce something splendid by accident; we can create what we cannot conceive.

### *Twelve*

General ideals used to dominate literature. They have been driven out by the cry of "art for art's sake." General ideals used to dominate politics. They have been driven out by the cry of "efficiency," which may roughly be translated as "politics for politics' sake." Persistently for the last twenty years the ideals of order or liberty have dwindled in our books; the ambitions of wit and eloquence have dwindled in our parliaments. Literature has purposely become less political; politics have purposely become less literary.

### *Thirteen*

For completeness and even comfort are almost the definitions of insanity. The lunatic is the man who

lives in a small world and thinks it is a large one: he is the man who lives in a tenth of the truth, and thinks it is the whole. The madman cannot conceive any cosmos outside a certain tale of conspiracy or vision. Hence the more clearly we see the world divided into Saxons and non-Saxons, into our splendid selves and the rest, the more certain we may be that we are slowly and quietly going mad. The more plain and satisfying our state appears, the more we may know that we are living in an unreal world. For the real world is not satisfying. The more clear become the colours and facts of Anglo-Saxon superiority, the more surely we may know we are in a dream. For the real world is not clear or plain. The real world is full of bracing bewilderments and brutal surprises.

*Fourteen*

Comfort is the blessing and the curse of the English, and of Americans of the Pogrom type also. With them it is a loud comfort, a wild comfort, a screaming and capering comfort; but comfort at bottom still. For there is but an inch of difference between the cushioned chamber and the padded cell.

*Fifteen*

But who will write us a riding song  
Or a hunting song or a drinking song,  
Fit for them that arose and rode  
When day and the wine were red ?  
But bring me a quart of claret out,  
And I will write you a clinking song,  
A song of war and a song of wine  
And a song to wake the dead.

*Sixteen*

It is quaint that people talk of separating dogma from education. Dogma is actually the only thing that cannot be separated from education. It is education. A teacher who is not dogmatic is simply a teacher who is not teaching.

*Seventeen*

Private lives are more important than public reputations.

*Eighteen*

We have in our great cities abolished the clean and sane darkness of the country. We have outlawed Night and sent her wandering in wild meadows; we have lit eternal watch-fires against her return. We have made a new cosmos, and as a consequence our own sun and stars. And as a consequence also, and most justly, we have made our own darkness. Just as every lamp is a warm human moon, so every fog is a rich human nightfall. If it were not for this mystic accident we should never see darkness: and he who has never seen darkness has never seen the sun.

*Nineteen*

Fog for us is the chief form of that outward pressure which compresses mere luxury into real comfort. It makes the world small, in the same spirit as in that common and happy cry that the world is small, meaning that it is full of friends. The first man that emerges out of the mist with a light is for us Prometheus, a saviour bringing fire to men, greater than the heroes, better than the saints, Man Friday. Every rumble of a cart, every cry in the distance, marks the heart of humanity beating undaunted in the darkness. It is wholly human; man toiling in his cloud. If real darkness is like the embrace of God, this is the dark embrace of man.

*Twenty*

The worst tyrant is not the man who rules by fear; the worst tyrant is he who rules by love and plays on it as on a harp.

*Twenty-one*

There is nothing so fiercely realistic as sentiment and emotion. Thought and the intellect are content to accept abstractions, summaries, and generalisations; they are content that ten acres of ground should be called for the sake of argument X, and ten widows' incomes called for the sake of argument Y; they are content that a thousand awful and mysterious disappearances from the visible universe should be summed up as the mortality of a district, or that ten thousand intoxications of the soul

should bear the general name of the instinct of sex. Rationalism can live upon air and signs and numbers. But sentiment must have reality; emotion demands the real fields, the real widows' homes, the real corpse, and the real woman.

*Twenty-two*

The devil plotted since the world was young with alchemies of fire and witches' oils and magic. But he never made a man.

*Twenty-three*

Hate is the weakness of a thwarted thing. Pride is the weakness of a thing unpraised.

*Twenty-four*

Mr Wells recalls Burke in two essentials: that he is ready to expend thoughts on the cause of the present discontents; but that when it comes to the point, he refuses the Revolution. And even the discontents are delicate discontents of his own.

*Twenty-five*

Research is the search of people who don't know what they want.

*Twenty-six*

Lady, the stars are falling pale and small,  
Lady, we will not live if life be all,  
Forgetting those good stars in heaven hung,  
    When all the world was young;  
For more than gold was in a ring, and love was not a little  
    thing,  
Between the trees in Ivywood, when all the world was  
    young.

*Twenty-seven*

Pessimism is the madness of Christian pity; and optimism the self-indulgence of Christian faith.

*Twenty-eight*

Is there, then, any vital meaning in this idea of "greatness" or in our laments over its absence in our own time?

Some people say, indeed, that this sense of mass is but a mirage of distance, and that men always think dead men great and live men small. They seem to think that the law of perspective in the mental world is the precise opposite to the law of perspective in the physical world. They think that figures grow larger as they walk away. But this theory cannot be made to correspond with the facts. We do not lack great men in our own day because we decline to look for them in our own day; on the contrary, we are looking for them all day long.

### *Twenty-nine*

We are not, as a matter of fact, mere examples of those who stone the prophets and leave it to their posterity to build their sepulchres. If the world would only produce our perfect prophet, solemn, searching, universal, nothing would give us keener pleasure than to build his sepulchre. In our eagerness we might even bury him alive.

### *Thirty*

It is a good rule of philosophy when regarding an end to refer to the beginning.

### *Thirty-one*

I plod and peer amid mean sounds and shapes,  
 I hunt for dusty gain and dreary praise,  
 And slowly pass the dismal grinning days,  
 Monkeying each other like a line of apes.

What care? There was one hour amid all these  
 When I had stripped off like a tawdry glove  
 My starriest hopes and wants, for very love  
 Of time and desolate eternities.

Yea, for one great hour's triumph, not in me  
 Nor any hope of mine did I rejoice,  
 But in a meadow game of girls and boys  
 Some sunset in the centuries to be.

# June

## *One*

If there is one thing that I have believed from the first and go on believing more and more, it is that everything is interesting; that anything will turn symbolic if you really stare at it.

## *Two*

There is one very curious idea into which we have been hypnotised by the more eloquent poets, and that is that nature in the sense of what is ordinarily called the country is a thing entirely stately and beautiful as those terms are commonly understood. The whole world of the fantastic, all things top-heavy, lop-sided, and non-sensical are conceived as the work of man, gargoyles, German jugs, Chinese pots, political caricatures, burlesque epics, the pictures of Mr Aubrey Beardsley and the puns of Robert Browning. But in truth a part, and a very large part, of the sanity and power of nature lies in the fact that out of her comes all this instinct of caricature. Nature may present itself to the poet too often as consisting of stars and lilies; but these are not poets who live in the country; they are men who go to the country for inspiration and could no more live in the country than they could go to bed in Westminster Abbey. Men who live in the heart of nature, farmers and peasants, know that nature means cows and pigs, and creatures more humorous than can be found in a whole sketch-book of Callot. And the element of the grotesque in art, like the element of the grotesque in nature, means, in the main, energy, the energy which takes its own forms and goes its own way.

## *Three*

In our oligarchy, a public man must either decline to govern and be content to criticise; or he must govern with the governing class. No governing class in history has ever endured a dictator; hardly any such class has ever permitted one to appear.

*Four*

An artist who is at once individual and complete attracts a type of praise which is a sort of disparagement; and even those who overrate him underrate him. For the tendency is always to insist on his art; and by art is often meant merely arrangement. Because a very few colours can be harmoniously arranged in a picture, it is implied that he has not many colours on his palette.

*Five*

The modern mind is not a donkey that wants kicking to make it go on. The modern mind is more like a motor-car on a lonely road which two amateur motorists have been just clever enough to take to pieces, but are not quite clever enough to put together again.

*Six*

I have often been haunted with a fancy that the creeds of men might be paralleled and represented in their beverages. Wine might stand for genuine Catholicism, and ale for genuine Protestantism; for these at least are real religions with comfort and strength in them. Clean cold Agnosticism would be clean cold water—an excellent thing if you can get it. Most modern ethical and idealistic movements might be well represented by soda-water—which is a fuss about nothing. Mr Bernard Shaw's philosophy is exactly like black coffee—it awakens, but it does not really inspire. Modern hygienic materialism is very like cocoa; it would be impossible to express one's contempt for it in stronger terms than that. Sometimes one may come across something that may honestly be compared to milk, an ancient and heathen mildness, an earthly yet sustaining mercy—the milk of human kindness. You can find it in a few pagan poets and a few old fables; but it is everywhere dying out.

*Seven*

A bull is only a paradox which people are too stupid to understand. It is the rapid summary of something which is at once so true and so complex that the speaker who has the swift intelligence to perceive it has not the slow patience to explain it.

### *Eight*

To the man who sees the marvellousness of all things, the surface of life is fully as strange and magical as its interior; clearness and plainness of life is fully as mysterious as its mysteries. The young man in evening dress, pulling on his gloves, is quite as elemental a figure as any anchorite, quite as incomprehensible, and indeed quite as charming.

### *Nine*

The root of legal monogamy does not lie (as Shaw and his friends are for ever drearily asserting) in the fact that the man is a mere tyrant and the woman a mere slave. It lies in the fact that if their love for each other is the noblest and finest love conceivable, it can only find its heroic expression in both becoming slaves.

### *Ten*

The wise man will follow a star, low and large and fierce in the heavens, but the nearer he comes to it the smaller and smaller it will grow, till he finds it the humble lantern over some little inn or stable. Not till we know the high things shall we know how lovely they are.

### *Eleven*

Very few people in this world would care to listen to the real defence of their own characters. The real defence, the defence which belongs to the Day of Judgment, would make such damaging admissions, would clear away so many artificial virtues, would tell such tragedies of weakness and failure, that a man would sooner be misunderstood and censured by the world than exposed to that awful and merciless eulogy. One of the most practically difficult matters which arise from the code of manners and the conventions of life, is that we cannot properly justify a human being, because that justification would involve the admission of things which may not conventionally be admitted. We might explain and make human and respectable, for example, the conduct of some old fighting politician, who, for the good of his party and his country, acceded to measures of which he disapproved; but we cannot, because we are not allowed to admit that he ever acceded to measures of which he disapproved.

### *Twelve*

It is untrue to say that what matters is quality and not quantity. Most men have made one good joke in their lives; but to make jokes as Dickens made them is to be a great man. Many forgotten poets have let fall a lyric with one really perfect image; but when we open any play of Shakespeare, good or bad, at any page, important or unimportant, with the practical certainty of finding some imagery that at least arrests the eye and probably enriches the memory, we are putting our trust in a great man.

### *Thirteen*

The world has kept sentimentalities simply because they are the most practical things in the world. They alone make men do things. The world does not encourage a quite rational lover, simply because a perfectly rational lover would never get married. The world does not encourage a perfectly rational army, because a perfectly rational army would run away.

### *Fourteen*

Poetry deals entirely with those great eternal and mainly forgotten wishes which are the ultimate despots of existence. Poetry presents things as they are to our emotions, not as they are to any theory, however plausible, or any argument, however conclusive. If love is in truth a glorious vision, poetry will say that it is a glorious vision, and no philosophers will persuade poetry to say that it is the exaggeration of the instinct of sex. If bereavement is a bitter and continually aching thing, poetry will say that it is so, and no philosophers will persuade poetry to say that it is an evolutionary stage of great biological value. And here comes in the whole value and object of poetry, that it is perpetually challenging all systems with the test of a terrible sincerity.

### *Fifteen*

Music is mere beauty; it is beauty in the abstract, beauty in solution. It is a shapeless and liquid element of beauty, in which a man may really float, not indeed affirming the truth, but not denying it.

*Sixteen*

A man must be orthodox upon most things or he will never even have time to preach his own heresy.

*Seventeen*

A true poet writes about the spring being beautiful because (after a thousand springs) the spring really is beautiful. In the same way the true humorist writes about a man sitting down on his hat because the act of sitting down on one's own hat (however often and admirably performed) really is extremely funny. We must not dismiss a new poet because his poem is called *To a Skylark*; nor must we dismiss a humorist because his new farce is called *My Mother-in-Law*. He may really have splendid and inspiring things to say upon an eternal problem. The whole question is whether he has.

*Eighteen*

"For the barbarian is the man who regards his passions as their own excuse for being, who does not domesticate them either by understanding their cause, or by conceiving their goal." Whether this be or be not a good definition of the barbarian, it is an excellent and perfect definition of the poet. It might, perhaps, be suggested that barbarians, as a matter of fact, are generally highly traditional and respectable persons who would not put a feather wrong in their headgear, and who generally have very few feelings and think very little about those they have. It is when we have grown to a greater and more civilised stature that we begin to realise and put to ourselves intellectually the great feelings that sleep in the depths of us. Thus it is that the literature of our day has steadily advanced towards a passionate simplicity, and we become more primeval as the world grows older, until Whitman writes huge and chaotic psalms to express the sensations of a schoolboy out fishing, and Maeterlinck embodies in symbolic dramas the feelings of a child in the dark.

*Nineteen*

We may scale the heavens and find new stars innumerable, but there is still the new star we have not found—that on which we were born.

*Twenty*

It may be a good thing to forget and forgive; but it is altogether too easy a trick to forget and be forgiven.

*Twenty-one*

Do the people who call one of Browning's poems scientific in its analysis realise the meaning of what they say? One is tempted to think that they know a scientific analysis when they see it as little as they know a good poem. The one supreme difference between the scientific method and the artistic method is, roughly speaking, simply this—that a scientific statement means the same thing wherever and whenever it is uttered, and that an artistic statement means something entirely different, according to the relation in which it stands to its surroundings. The remark, let us say, that the whale is a mammal, or the remark that sixteen ounces go to a pound, is equally true, and means exactly the same thing, whether we state it at the beginning of a conversation or at the end, whether we print it in a dictionary or chalk it up on a wall. But if we take some phrase commonly used in the art of literature—such a sentence, for the sake of example, as “the dawn was breaking”—the matter is quite different. If the sentence came at the beginning of a short story, it might be a mere descriptive prelude. If it were the last sentence in a short story, it might be poignant with some peculiar irony or triumph.

*Twenty-two*

Earth is not even earth without heaven, as a landscape is not a landscape without the sky. And in a universe without God there is not room enough for a man.

*Twenty-three*

It may be we shall rise the last as Frenchmen rose the first; Our wrath come after Russia's, and our wrath be the worst. It may be we are set to mark by our riot and our rest God's scorn of all man's governance: it may be beer is best. But we are the people of England, and we never have spoken yet.

Mock at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget.

### *Twenty-four*

The right and proper thing, of course, is that every good patriot should stop at home and curse his own country. So long as that is being done everywhere, we may be sure that things are fairly happy, and being kept up to a reasonably high standard. So long as we are discontented separately we may be well content as a whole.

### *Twenty-five*

We should think it ridiculous to speak of a man as suffering from his boots if we meant that he had really no boots. But we do speak of a man suffering from digestion when we mean that he suffers from a lack of digestion. In the same way we speak of a man suffering from nerves when we mean that his nerves are more inefficient than anyone else's nerves. If anyone wishes to see how grossly language can degenerate, he need only compare the old optimistic use of the word nervous, which we employ in speaking of a nervous grip, with the new pessimistic use of the word, which we employ in speaking of a nervous manner.

### *Twenty-six*

Do not be an opportunist; try to be theoretic at all the opportunities; Fate can be trusted to do all the opportunist part of it. Do not try to bend; any more than the trees try to bend. Try to grow straight; and life will bend you.

### *Twenty-seven*

Men do not like another man because he is a genius, least of all when they happen to be geniuses themselves.

### *Twenty-eight*

It is not by any means self-evident upon the face of it that an institution like the liberty of speech is right or just. It is not natural or obvious to let a man utter follies and abominations which you believe to be bad for mankind any more than it is natural or obvious to let a man dig up a part of the public road, or infect half a town with typhoid fever. The theory of free speech, that truth is so much larger and stranger and more many-sided than we

know of, that it is very much better at all costs to hear everyone's account of it, is a theory which has been justified upon the whole by experiment, but which remains a very daring and even a very surprising theory. It is really one of the great discoveries of the modern time; but, once admitted, it is a principle that does not merely affect politics, but philosophy, ethics, and finally poetry.

*Twenty-nine*

The true patriot is always doubtful of victory; because he knows that he is dealing with a living thing; a thing with free will. To be certain of free will is to be uncertain of success.

*Thirty*

Nothing is more certain than that though this world is the only world that we have known, or of which we could even dream, the fact remains that we have named it "a strange world." In other words, we have certainly felt that this world did not explain itself, that something in its complete and patent picture has been omitted. And Browning was right in saying that in a cosmos where incompleteness implies completeness, life implies immortality.

# July

## *One*

The giant laughter of Christian men  
That roars through a thousand tales,  
Where greed is an ape and pride is an ass,  
And Jack's away with his master's lass,  
And the miser is banged with all his brass,  
The farmer with all his flails;  
Tales that tumble and tales that trick,  
Yet end not all in scorning—  
Of kings and clowns in a merry plight,  
And the clock gone wrong and the world gone right,  
That the mummers sing upon Christmas night  
And Christmas Day in the morning.

## *Two*

We talk of art as something artificial in comparison with life. But I sometimes fancy that the very highest art is more real than life itself. At least this is true; that in proportion as passions become real they become poetical; the lover is always trying to be the poet.

## *Three*

Evolution is a metaphor from mere automatic unrolling. Progress is a metaphor from merely walking along a road—very likely the wrong road. But reform is a metaphor for reasonable and determined men: it means that we see a certain thing out of shape and we mean to put it into shape.

## *Four*

Man is more himself, man is more manlike, when joy is the fundamental thing in him, and grief the superficial. Melancholy should be an innocent interlude, a tender and fugitive frame of mind; praise should be the permanent pulsation of the soul. Pessimism is at best an emotional half-holiday; joy is the uproarious labour by which all things live.

*Five*

I have dealt at length with such typical triads of doubt in order to convey the main contention—that my own case for Christianity is rational; but it is not simple. It is an accumulation of varied facts, like the attitude of the ordinary agnostic. But the ordinary agnostic has got his facts all wrong. He is a non-believer for a multitude of reasons, but they are untrue reasons. He doubts because the Middle Ages were barbaric, but they weren't; because Darwinism is demonstrated, but it isn't; because miracles do not happen, but they do; because monks were lazy, but they were very industrious; because nuns are unhappy, but they are particularly cheerful; because Christian art was sad and pale, but it was picked out in peculiarly bright colours and gay with gold; because modern science is moving away from the supernatural, but it isn't, it is moving towards the supernatural with the rapidity of a railway train.

*Six*

The perfect happiness of men on the earth (if it ever comes) will not be a flat and solid thing, like the satisfaction of animals. It will be an exact and perilous balance; like that of a desperate romance. Man must have just enough faith in himself to have adventures, and just enough doubt of himself to enjoy them.

*Seven*

O well for him that loves the sun,  
That sees the heaven-race ridden or run,  
The splashing seas of sunset won,  
And shouts for victory.

God made the sun to crown his head,  
And when death's dart at last is sped,  
At least it will not find him dead,  
And pass the carrion by.

O ill for him that loves the sun;  
Shall the sun stoop for anyone?  
Shall the sun weep for hearts undone  
Or heavy souls that pray?

Not less for us and everyone  
Was that white web of splendour spun;  
O well for him who loves the sun  
Although the sun should slay.

*Eight*

By insisting specially on the immanence of God we get introspection, self-isolation, quietism, social indifference—Tibet. By insisting specially on the transcendence of God we get wonder, curiosity, moral and political adventure, righteous indignation—Christendom. Insisting that God is inside man, man is always inside himself. By insisting that God transcends man, man has transcended himself.

*Nine*

It is customary to complain of the bustle and strenuousness of our epoch. But in truth the chief mark of our epoch is a profound laziness and fatigue; and the fact is that the real laziness is the cause of the apparent bustle. Take one quite external case; the streets are noisy with taxicabs and motor-cars; but this is not due to human activity but to human repose. There would be less bustle if there were more activity, if people were simply walking about. Our world would be more silent if it were more strenuous. And this which is true of the apparent physical bustle is true also of the apparent bustle of the intellect.

*Ten*

Most of the machinery of modern language is labour-saving machinery; and it saves mental labour very much more than it ought. Scientific phrases are used like scientific wheels and piston-rods to make swifter and smoother yet the path of the comfortable. Long words go rattling by us like long railway trains. We know they are carrying thousands who are too tired or too indolent to walk and think for themselves.

*Eleven*

It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands.

*Twelve*

Beneath the gnarled old Knowledge-tree  
Sat, like an owl, the evil sage:  
"The world's a bubble," solemnly  
He read, and turned a second page.  
  
"A bubble, then, old crow," I cried,  
"God keep you in your weary wit!  
A bubble—have you ever spied  
The colours I have seen on it?"

*Thirteen*

It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own.

*Fourteen*

There is a vital objection to the advice merely to grin and bear it. The objection is that if you merely bear it, you do not grin.

*Fifteen*

As long as the vision of heaven is always changing, the vision of earth will be exactly the same. No ideal will remain long enough to be realised. The modern young man will never change his environment; for he will always change his mind.

*Sixteen*

If our life is ever really as beautiful as a fairy tale, we shall have to remember that all the beauty of a fairy tale lies in this: that the prince has a wonder which just stops short of being fear. If he is afraid of the giant, there is an end of him; but also if he is not astonished at the giant, there is an end of the fairy tale. The whole point depends upon his being at once humble enough to wonder and haughty enough to defy.

*Seventeen*

For a few years our corner of Western Europe has had a fancy for this thing we call fiction; that is for writing down our own lives in order to look at them. But though we call it fiction, it differs from older literatures chiefly

in being less fictitious. It imitates not only life, but the limitations of life; it not only reproduces life, it reproduces death. But outside us, in every other country, in every other age, there has been going on from the beginning a more fictitious literature—I mean the kind now called folklore, the literature of the people. Our modern novels which deal with men as they are, are chiefly produced by a small and educated section of society. But this other literature deals with men greater than they are—with demi-gods and heroes; and that is far too important a matter to be trusted to the educated classes. The fashioning of these portents is a popular trade, like ploughing or brick-laying; the men who made hedges, the men who made ditches, were the men who made ditties. Men could not elect their kings, but they could elect their gods.

### *Eighteen*

One can hardly think too little of one's self. One can hardly think too much of one's soul.

### *Nineteen*

In so far as I am Man I am the chief of creatures. In so far as I am a man I am the chief of sinners.

### *Twenty*

It is currently said that hope goes with youth, and lends to youth its wings of a butterfly; but I fancy that hope is the last gift given to man, and the only gift not given to youth. Youth is pre-eminently the period in which a man can be lyric, fanatical, poetic; but youth is the period in which a man can be hopeless. The end of every episode is the end of the world.

### *Twenty-one*

But the power of hoping through everything, the knowledge that the soul survives its adventures, that great inspiration comes to the middle-aged; God has kept that good wine until now. It is from the backs of the elderly gentlemen that the wings of the butterfly should burst.

*Twenty-two*

There is nothing that so much mystifies the young as the consistent frivolity of the old. They have discovered their indestructibility. They are in their second and clearer childhood, and there is a meaning in the merriment of their eyes. They have seen the end of the End of the World.

*Twenty-three*

Not only is suicide a sin, it is the sin. It is the ultimate and absolute evil, the refusal to take an interest in existence; the refusal to take the oath of loyalty to life. The man who kills a man, kills a man. The man who kills himself, kills all men; as far as he is concerned he wipes out the world. His act is worse (symbolically considered) than any rape or dynamite outrage. For it destroys all buildings: it insults all women.

*Twenty-four*

There are two main moral necessities for the work of a great man: the first is that he should believe in the truth of his message; the second is that he should believe in the acceptability of his message. It was the whole tragedy of Carlyle that he had the first and not the second.

*Twenty-five*

Paganism declared that virtue was in a balance; Christianity declared it was in a conflict; the collision of two passions apparently opposite. Of course they were not really inconsistent; but they were such that it was hard to hold simultaneously. Let us follow for a moment the clue of the martyr and the suicide; and take the case of courage. No quality has ever so much addled the brains and tangled the definitions of merely rational sages. Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die. "He that will lose his life, the same shall save it," is not a piece of mysticism for saints and heroes. It is a piece of everyday advice for sailors or mountaineers.

### *Twenty-six*

No one doubts that an ordinary man can get on with this world: but we demand not strength enough to get on with it, but strength enough to get it on. Can he hate it enough to change it, and yet love it enough to think it worth changing? Can he look up at its colossal good without once feeling acquiescence? Can he look up at its colossal evil without once feeling despair? Can he, in short, be at once not only a pessimist and an optimist, but a fanatical pessimist and a fanatical optimist? Is he enough of a pagan to die for the world, and enough of a Christian to die to it? In this combination, I maintain, it is the rational optimist who fails, the irrational optimist who succeeds. He is ready to smash the whole universe for the sake of itself.

### *Twenty-seven*

An optimist could not mean a man who thought everything right and nothing wrong. For that is meaningless; it is like calling everything right and nothing left. Upon the whole, I came to the conclusion that the optimist thought everything good except the pessimist, and that the pessimist thought everything bad, except himself.

### *Twenty-eight*

The thing I mean can be seen, for instance, in children, when they find some game or joke that they specially enjoy. A child kicks his legs rhythmically through excess, not absence of life. Because children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, "Do it again"; and the grown-up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown-up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony.

### *Twenty-nine*

The test of all happiness is gratitude; and I felt grateful, though I hardly knew to whom. Children are grateful when Santa Claus puts in their stockings gifts of toys or sweets. Could I not be grateful to Santa Claus when he

put in my stockings the gift of two miraculous legs ? We thank people for birthday presents of cigars and slippers. Can I thank no one for the birthday present of birth ?

*Thirty*

A law implies that we know the nature of the generalisation and enactment; not merely that we have noticed some of the effects. If there is a law that pick-pockets shall go to prison, it implies that there is an imaginable mental connection between the idea of prison and the idea of picking pockets. And we know what the idea is. We can say why we take liberty from a man who takes liberties. But we cannot say why an egg can turn into a chicken any more than we can say why a bear could turn into a fairy prince. As ideas, the egg and the chicken are further off each other than the bear and the prince; for no egg in itself suggests a chicken, whereas some princes do suggest bears.

*Thirty-one*

I would always trust the old wives' fables against the old maids' facts. As long as wit is mother wit it can be as wild as it pleases.

# August

## *One*

Only poetry can realise motives, because motives are all pictures of happiness. And the supreme and most practical value of poetry is this, that in poetry, as in music, a note is struck which expresses beyond the power of rational statement a condition of mind, and all actions arise from a condition of mind. Prose can only use a large and clumsy notation; it can only say that a man is miserable, or that a man is happy; it is forced to ignore that there are a million diverse kinds of misery and a million diverse kinds of happiness. Poetry alone, with the first throb of its metre, can tell us whether the depression is the kind of depression that drives a man to suicide, or the kind of depression that drives him to the Tivoli. Poetry can tell us whether the happiness is the happiness that sends a man to a restaurant, or the much richer and fuller happiness that sends him to church.

## *Two*

For wit is always connected with the idea that truth is close and clear. Humour, on the other hand, is always connected with the idea that truth is tricky and mystical and easily mistaken.

## *Three*

Nothing is important except the fate of the soul; and literature is only redeemed from an utter triviality, surpassing that of naughts and crosses, by the fact that it describes not the world around us, or the things on the retina of the eye, or the enormous irrelevancy of encyclopædias, but some condition to which the human spirit can come.

## *Four*

I doubt if anyone of any tenderness of imagination can see the hand of a child and not be a little frightened of it. It is awful to think of the essential human energy moving so tiny a thing; it is like imagining that human nature

could live in the wing of a butterfly, or the leaf of a tree. When we look upon lives so human, so human and yet so small, we feel as if we ourselves were enlarged to an embarrassing bigness of stature. We feel the same kind of obligation to these creatures that a deity might feel if he had created something that he could not understand.

### *Five*

The modern mind is forced towards the future by a certain sense of fatigue, not unmixed with terror, with which it regards the past.

### *Six*

There is a certain kind of fascination, a strictly artistic fascination, which arises from a matter being hinted at in such a way as to leave a certain tormenting uncertainty even at the end. It is well sometimes to half understand a poem in the same manner that we half understand the world. One of the deepest and strangest of all human moods is the mood which will suddenly strike us perhaps in a garden at night, or deep in sloping meadows, the feeling that every flower and leaf has just uttered something stupendously direct and important, and that we have by a prodigy of imbecility not heard or understood it.

### *Seven*

For if a man really cannot make a fool of himself, we may be quite certain that the effort is superfluous.

### *Eight*

Mankind in the main has always regarded reason as a bit of a joke.

### *Nine*

But this new cloudy political cowardice has rendered useless the old English compromise. People have begun to be terrified of an improvement merely because it is complete. They call it Utopian and revolutionary that anyone should really have his own way, or anything be really done, and done with. Compromise used to mean that half a loaf was better than no bread. Among modern statesmen it really seems to mean that half a loaf is better than a whole loaf.

*Ten*

It is the nature of love to bind itself, and the institution of marriage merely paid the average man the compliment of taking him at his word. Modern sages offer to the lover, with an ill-flavoured grin, the largest liberties and the fullest irresponsibility; but they do not respect him as the old church respected him; they do not write his oath upon the heavens, as the record of his highest moment; they give him every liberty except the liberty to sell his liberty, which is the only one that he wants.

*Eleven*

The English statesman is bribed not to be bribed. He is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, so that he may never afterwards be found with the silver spoons in his pocket.

*Twelve*

But very broadly speaking, it may still be said that women stand for the dignity of love and men for the dignity of comradeship. I mean that the institution would hardly be respected if the males of the tribe did not mount guard over it.

*Thirteen*

We often read nowadays of the valour or audacity with which some rebel attacks a hoary tyranny or an antiquated superstition. There is not really any courage at all in attacking hoary or antiquated things, any more than in offering to fight one's grandmother. The really courageous man is he who defies tyrannies young as the morning and superstitions fresh as the first flowers. The only true free-thinker is he whose intellect is as much free from the future as from the past.

*Fourteen*

What makes it difficult for the average man to be a universalist is that the average man has to be a specialist; he has not only to learn one trade, but to learn it so well as to uphold him in a more or less ruthless society. This is generally true of males from the first hunter to the last electrical engineer; each has not merely to act, but to excel.

Nimrod has not only to be a mighty hunter before the Lord, but also a mighty hunter before the other hunters. The electrical engineer has to be a very electrical engineer, or he is outstripped by engineers yet more electrical.

*Fifteen*

It is sometimes curious to notice how a critic, possessing no little cultivation and fertility, will, in speaking of a work of art, let fall almost accidentally some apparently trivial comment, which reveals to us with an instantaneous and complete mental illumination the fact that he does not, so far as that work of art is concerned, in the smallest degree understand what he is talking about. He may have intended to correct merely some minute detail of the work he is studying, but that single movement is enough to blow him and all his diplomas into the air.

*Sixteen*

God is that which can make something out of nothing. Man (it may truly be said) is that which can make something out of anything. In other words, while the joy of God must be unlimited creation, the special joy of man is limited creation, the combination of creation with limits.

*Seventeen*

Anyone could easily excuse the ill humour of the poor. But great masses of the poor have not even any ill humour to be excused. Their cheeriness is startling enough to be the foundation of a miracle play; and certainly startling enough to be the foundation of a romance.

*Eighteen*

Looking down on things may be a delightful experience, only there is nothing, from a mountain to a cabbage, that is really *seen* when it is seen from a balloon. The philosopher of the ego sees everything, no doubt, from a high and rarefied heaven; only he sees everything foreshortened or deformed.

*Nineteen*

Perhaps the truth can be put most pointedly thus: that democracy has one real enemy, and that is civilisation.

*Twenty*

Women speak to each other; men speak to the subject they are speaking about. Many an honest man has sat in a ring of his five best friends under heaven and forgotten who was in the room while he explained some system. This is not peculiar to intellectual men; men are all theoretical, whether they are talking about God or about golf. Men are all impersonal; that is to say, republican. No one remembers after a really good talk who has said the good things.

Every man speaks to a visionary multitude; a mystical cloud that is called the club.

*Twenty-one*

Discipline does not involve the Carlylean notion that somebody is always right when everybody is wrong, and that we must discover and crown that somebody. On the contrary, discipline means that in certain frightfully rapid circumstances one can trust anybody so long as he is not everybody.

*Twenty-two*

One of the most curious things to notice about popular æsthetic criticism is the number of phrases it will be found to use which are intended to express an æsthetic failure, and which express merely an æsthetic variety. Thus, for instance, the traveller will often hear the advice from local lovers of the picturesque, "The scenery round such and such a place has no interest; it is quite flat." To disparage scenery as quite flat is, of course, like disparaging a swan as quite white, or an Italian sky as quite blue. Flatness is a sublime quality in certain landscapes, just as rockiness is a sublime quality in others.

*Twenty-three*

The most important man on earth is the perfect man who is not there.

*Twenty-four*

Idealism is only considering everything in its practical essence. Idealism only means that we should consider

a poker in reference to poking before we discuss its suitability for wife-beating; that we should ask if an egg is good enough for practical poultry-rearing before we decide that the egg is bad enough for practical politics.

### *Twenty-five*

When the chord of monotony is stretched most tight, then it breaks with a sound like song.

### *Twenty-six*

Religion, the immortal maiden, has been a maid-of-all-work as well as a servant of mankind. She provided men at once with the theoretic laws of an unalterable cosmos; and also with the practical rules of the rapid and thrilling game of morality. She taught logic to the student and told fairy tales to the children; it was her business to confront the nameless gods whose fear is on all flesh, and also to see the streets were spotted with silver and scarlet, that there was a day for wearing ribbons or an hour for ringing bells.

### *Twenty-seven*

The future is a blank wall on which every man can write his own name as large as he likes; the past I find already covered with illegible scribbles, such as Plato, Isaiah, Shakespeare, Michael Angelo, Napoleon. I can make the future as narrow as myself; the past is obliged to be as broad and turbulent as humanity.

### *Twenty-eight*

You hold that your heretics and sceptics have helped the world forward and handed on a lamp of progress. I deny it. Nothing is plainer from real history than that each of your heretics invented a complete cosmos of his own which the next heretic smashed entirely to pieces. Who knows now exactly what Nestorius taught? Who cares? There are only two things that we know for certain about it. The first is that Nestorius, as a heretic, taught something quite opposite to the teaching of Arius, the heretic who came before him, and something quite useless to James Turnbull, the heretic who comes after.

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## AUGUST

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### *Twenty-nine*

There is a strange process in history by which things that decay turn into the very opposite of themselves. Thus in England Puritanism began as the hardest of creeds, but has ended as the softest; soft-hearted and not unfrequently soft-headed. Of old the Puritan in war was certainly the Puritan at his best; it was the Puritan in peace whom no Christian could be expected to stand.

### *Thirty*

Surely the vilest point of human vanity is exactly that; to ask to be admired for admiring what your admirers do not admire.

### *Thirty-one*

Pessimism says that life is so short that it gives nobody a chance; religion says that life is so short that it gives everybody his final chance.

# September

## *One*

Poetry deals with primal and conventional things—the hunger for bread, the love of woman, the love of children, the desire for immortal life. If men really had new sentiments, poetry could not deal with them. If, let us say, a man did not feel a bitter craving to eat bread; but did, by way of substitute, feel a fresh, original craving to eat brass fenders or mahogany tables, poetry could not express him. If a man, instead of falling in love with a woman, fell in love with a fossil or a sea-anemone, poetry could not express him. Poetry can only express what is original in one sense—the sense in which we speak of original sin. It is original, not in the paltry sense of being new, but in the deeper sense of being old; it is original in the sense that it deals with origins.

## *Two*

It is quite easy to see why a legend is treated, and ought to be treated, more respectfully than a book of history. The legend is generally made by the majority of people in the village, who are sane. The book is generally written by the one man in the village who is mad.

## *Three*

You cannot imprison a slave, because you cannot enslave a slave.

## *Four*

The Eugenic professor may or may not succeed in choosing a baby's parents; it is quite certain that he cannot succeed in choosing his own parents. All his thoughts, including his Eugenic thoughts, are, by the very principle of those thoughts, flowing from a doubtful or tainted source. In short, we should need a perfectly Wise Man to do the thing at all. And if he were a Wise Man he would not do it.

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## SEPTEMBER

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### *Five*

The key fact in the new development of plutocracy is that it will use its own blunder as an excuse for further crimes. Everywhere the very completeness of the impoverishment will be made a reason for the enslavement; though the men who impoverished were the same who enslaved. It is as if a highwayman not only took away a gentleman's horse and all his money, but then handed him over to the police for tramping without visible means of subsistence.

### *Six*

What happens when everyone is asleep is called Evolution. What happens when everyone is awake is called Revolution.

### *Seven*

There is one sin: to call a green leaf grey,  
Whereat the sun in heaven shuddereth.  
There is one blasphemy: for death to pray,  
For God alone knoweth the praise of death.

There is one creed: 'neath no world-terror's wing  
Apples forget to grow on apple-trees.  
There is one thing is needful—everything—  
The rest is vanity of vanities.

### *Eight*

The modern statesman is utterly ignorant of democracy (or of aristocracy, for that matter); but he is not ignorant of his own trade. His trade is the trade of a conjurer. It is not so honourable as that of a conjurer, because the conjurer only wishes his fraud to last for an instant. He does not really try to deceive you into thinking he does not deceive.

### *Nine*

It is when you really perceive the unity of mankind that you really perceive its variety. It is not a flippancy, it is a very sacred truth, to say that when men really understand that they are brothers they instantly begin to fight.

### *Ten*

Out through Paris and out and round beyond Paris, other men in dim blue coats swung out in long lines upon the plain, slowly folding upon Von Kluck like blue wings. Von Kluck stood an instant; and then, flinging a few secondary forces to delay the wing that was swinging round on him, dashed across the Allies' line at a desperate angle, to smash it in the centre as with a hammer. It was less desperate than it seemed; for he counted, and might well count, on the moral and physical bankruptcy of the British line and the end of the French line immediately in front of him, which for six days and nights he had chased before him like autumn leaves before a whirlwind. Not unlike autumn leaves, red-stained, dust-hued, and tattered, they lay there as if swept into a corner. But even as their conquerors wheeled eastwards, their bugles blew the charge; and the English went forward through the wood that is called Crecy, and stamped it with their seal for the second time, in the highest moment of all the secular history of man.

### *Eleven*

But it was not now the Crecy in which English and French knights had met in a more coloured age, in a battle that was rather a tournament. It was a league of all knights for the remains of all knighthood, of all brotherhood in arms or in arts, against that which is and has been radically unknighly and radically unbrotherly from the beginning. Much was to happen after—murder and flaming folly and madness in earth and sea and sky; but all men knew in their hearts that the third Prussian thrust had failed, and Christendom was delivered once more. The empire of blood and iron rolled slowly back towards the darkness of the northern forests; and the great nations of the West went forward; where side by side, as after a long lovers' quarrel, went the ensigns of St Denys and St George.

### *Twelve*

It not only takes all sorts to make a world, but it certainly takes all sorts to make a nation. If a nation could really

be shown to consist of one type, then it ought not to have self-government. It would be far better to attach it as an ornament or appendage to some other people.

*Thirteen*

A man who thinks clearly does not mean a man who thinks that anything can be done by thinking clearly. It means a man who thinks clearly enough to see that some things can and some things can't.

*Fourteen*

Individually, men may present a more or less rational appearance, eating, sleeping, and scheming. But humanity as a whole is changeful, mystical, fickle, delightful. Men are men, but Man is a woman.

*Fifteen*

The most incredible thing about miracles is that they happen. A few clouds in heaven do come together into the staring shape of one human eye. A tree does stand up in the landscape of a doubtful journey in the exact and elaborate shape of a note of interrogation. I have seen both these things myself within the last few days. Nelson does die in the instant of victory; and a man named Williams does quite accidentally murder a man named Williamson; it sounds like a sort of infanticide. In short, there is in life an element of elfin coincidence which people reckoning on the prosaic may perpetually miss. As it has been well expressed in the paradox of Poe, wisdom should reckon on the unforeseen.

*Sixteen*

In the heart of a plutocracy tradesmen become cunning enough to be more fastidious than their customers. They positively create difficulties so that their wealthy and weary clients may spend money and diplomacy in overcoming them. If there were a fashionable hotel in London which no man could enter who was under six foot, society would meekly make up parties of six-foot men to dine in it. If there were an expensive restaurant which by a mere caprice of its proprietor was only open on Thursday afternoon, it would be crowded on Thursday afternoon.

### Seventeen

"A crime," he said slowly, "is like any other work of art." Don't look surprised; crimes are by no means the only works of art that come from an infernal workshop. But every work of art, divine or diabolic, has one indispensable mark—I mean, that the centre of it is simple, however much the fulfilment may be complicated. Thus, in *Hamlet*, let us say, the grotesqueness of the grave-digger, the flowers of the mad girl, the fantastic finery of Osric, the pallor of the ghost, and the grin of the skull are all oddities in a sort of tangled wreath round one plain tragic figure of a man in black.

### Eighteen

Every one of us as a boy or girl has had some midnight dream of nameless obstacle and unutterable menace, in which there was, under whatever imbecile forms, all the deadly stress and panic of *Wuthering Heights*. Every one of us has had a day-dream of our own potential destiny not one atom more reasonable than *Jane Eyre*. And the truth which the Brontës came to tell us is the truth that many waters cannot quench love, and that suburban respectability cannot touch or damp a secret enthusiasm.

### Nineteen

It appears to us that of all the fairy tales none contains so vital a moral truth as the old story, existing in many forms, of Beauty and the Beast. There is written, with all the authority of a human scripture, the eternal and essential truth that until we love a thing in all its ugliness we cannot make it beautiful. This was the weak point in William Morris as a reformer: that he sought to reform modern life, and that he hated modern life, instead of loving it.

### Twenty

It is the standing peculiarity of this curious world of ours that almost everything in it has been extolled enthusiastically and invariably extolled to the disadvantage of everything else.

*Twenty-one*

When the pessimist is popular it must always be not because he shows all things to be bad, but because he shows some things to be good. Men can only join in a chorus of praise even if it is the praise of denunciation. The man who is popular must be optimistic about something even if he is only optimistic about pessimism.

*Twenty-two*

Everyone on this earth should believe, amid whatever madness or moral failure, that his life and temperament have some object on the earth. Everyone on the earth should believe that he has something to give to the world which cannot otherwise be given. Everyone should, for the good of men and the saving of his own soul, believe that it is possible, even if we are the enemies of the human race, to be the friends of God. The evil wrought by this mystical pride, great as it often is, is like a straw to the evil wrought by a materialistic self-abandonment. The crimes of the devil who thinks himself of immeasurable value are as nothing to the crimes of the devil who thinks himself of no value.

*Twenty-three*

Our modern attraction to short stories is not an accident of form; it is the sign of a real sense of fleetingness and fragility; it means that existence is only an impression, and perhaps only an illusion. A short story of to-day has the air of a dream; it has the irrevocable beauty of falsehood; we get a glimpse of grey streets of London or red plains of India, as in an opium vision; we see people—arresting people with fiery and appealing faces. But when the story is ended, the people are ended. We have no instinct of anything ultimate and enduring behind the episodes.

*Twenty-four*

The moderns, in a word, describe life in short stories because they are possessed with the sentiment that life itself is an uncommonly short story, and perhaps not a true

one. But in this elder literature, even in the comic literature (indeed, especially in the comic literature) the reverse is true. The characters are felt to be fixed things of which we have fleeting glimpses; that is, they are felt to be divine. Uncle Toby is talking for ever, as the elves are dancing for ever. We feel that whenever we hammer on the house of Falstaff, Falstaff will be at home. We feel it as a pagan would feel that, if a cry broke the silence after ages of unbelief, Apollo would still be listening in his temple.

*Twenty-five*

These writers may tell short stories, but we feel they are only parts of a long story. And herein lies the peculiar significance, the peculiar sacredness even, of penny dreadfuls and the common printed matter made for our errand-boys. Here in dim and desperate forms under the ban of our base culture, stormed at by silly magistrates, sneered at by silly schoolmasters—here is the old popular literature still popular; here is the old unmistakable voluptuousness, the thousand and one tales of Robin Hood. Here is the splendid and static boy, the boy who remains a boy through a thousand volumes and a thousand years. Here in mere alleys and dim shops, shadowed and shamed by the police, mankind is still driving its dark trade of heroes. And elsewhere in all other ages in braver fashion, under cleaner skies, the same eternal tale-telling goes on; and the whole mortal world is a factory of immortals.

*Twenty-six*

As our world advances through history towards its present epoch, it becomes more specialist, less democratic, and folklore turns gradually into fiction. But it is only slowly that the old elfin fire fades into the light of common realism.

*Twenty-seven*

For ages after our characters have dressed up in the clothes of mortals they betray the blood of the gods. Even our phraseology is full of relics of this. When a modern novel is devoted to the bewilderments of a weak

young clerk who cannot decide which woman he wants to marry, or which new religion he believes, we still give this knock-kneed cad the name of "the hero"—the name which is the crown of Achilles.

*Twenty-eight*

The popular preference for a story with "a happy ending" is not, or at least was not, a mere sweetstuff optimism; it is the remains of the old idea of the triumph of the dragon-slayer, the ultimate apotheosis of the man beloved of heaven.

*Twenty-nine*

"Where would a wise man hide a leaf? In the forest?"  
The other did not answer.

"If there were no forest, he would make a forest. And if he wished to hide a dead leaf, he would make a dead forest."

There was still no reply, and the priest added still more mildly and quietly:

"And if a man had to hide a dead body, he would make a field of dead bodies to hide it in."

*Thirty*

The principle of democracy, as I mean it, can be stated in two propositions. The first is this: that the things common to all men are more important than the things peculiar to any men. Ordinary things are more valuable than extraordinary things; nay, they are more extraordinary. Man is something more awful than men; something more strange. The sense of the miracle of humanity itself should be always more vivid to us than any marvels of power, intellect, art, or civilisation. The mere man on two legs, as such, should be felt as something more heart-breaking than any music and more startling than any caricature. Death is more tragic even than death by starvation. Having a nose is more comic even than having a Norman nose.

# October

## One

Lo ! I am come to autumn,  
When all the leaves are gold;  
Grey hairs and golden leaves cry out  
The year and I are old.

Now a great thing in the street  
Seems any human nod,  
Where shift in strange democracy  
The million masks of God.

In youth I sought the gold flower  
Hidden in wood or wold,  
But I am come to autumn,  
When all the leaves are gold.

## Two

There are two things in which men are manifestly and unmistakably equal. They are not equally clever or equally muscular or equally fat, as the sages of the modern reaction (with piercing insight) perceive. But this is a spiritual certainty, that all men are tragic. And this, again, is an equally sublime spiritual certainty, that all men are comic. No special and private sorrow can be so dreadful as the fact of having to die. And no freak or deformity can be so funny as the mere fact of having two legs. Every man is important if he loses his life; and every man is funny if he loses his hat and has to run after it.

## Three

The institution of the family is to be commended for precisely the same reasons that the institution of the nation, or the institution of the city, are in this matter to be commended. It is a good thing for a man to live in a family for the same reason that it is a good thing for a man to be besieged in a city. It is a good thing for a man to live in a family in the same sense that it is a beautiful and delightful thing for a man to be snowed up in a street.

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## OCTOBER

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They all force him to realise that life is not a thing from outside, but a thing from inside. Above all, they all insist upon the fact that life, if it be a truly stimulating and fascinating life, is a thing which, of its nature, exists in spite of ourselves.

### *Four*

We learn of the cruelty of some school or child factory from journalists; we learn it from inspectors, we learn it from doctors, we learn it even from shame-stricken schoolmasters and repentant sweaters; but we never learn it from the children, we never learn it from the victims. It would seem as if a living creature had to be taught, like an art of culture, the art of crying out when it is hurt.

### *Five*

We are always, in these days, asking our violent prophets to write violent satires. In order to write satire like that of Rabelais—satire that juggles with the stars and kicks the world about like a football—it is necessary to be oneself temperate, and even mild. A modern man like Nietzsche, a modern man like Gorky, a modern man like d'Annunzio, could not possibly write real and riotous satire. They are themselves too much on the borderlands. They could not be a success as caricaturists, for they are already a great success as caricatures.

### *Six*

The teetotaller has chosen a most unfortunate phrase for the drunkard when he says that the drunkard is making a beast of himself. The man who drinks ordinarily makes nothing but an ordinary man of himself. The man who drinks excessively makes a devil of himself. But nothing connected with a human and artistic thing like wine can bring one nearer to the brute life of nature. The only man who is, in the exact and literal sense of the words, making a beast of himself is the teetotaller.

### *Seven*

No man dare say of himself, over his own name, how badly he has behaved. No man dare say of himself, over his own name, how well he has behaved.

*Eight*

Moreover, of course, a touch of fiction is almost always essential to the real conveying of fact, because fact, as experienced, has a fragmentariness which is bewildering at first hand and quite blinding at second hand. Facts have at least to be sorted into compartments and the proper head and tail given back to each. The perfection and pointedness of art are a sort of substitute for the pungency of actuality.

Without this selection and completion our life seems a tangle of unfinished tales, a heap of novels, all volume one.

*Nine*

Melodrama is a form of art, legitimate like any other, as noble as farce, almost as noble as pantomime. The essence of melodrama is that it appeals to the moral sense in a highly simplified state, just as farce appeals to the sense of humour in a highly simplified state. Farce creates people who are so intellectually simple as to hide in packing-cases or pretend to be their own aunts. Melodrama creates people so morally simple as to kill their enemies in Oxford Street, and repent on seeing their mother's photograph. The object of the simplification in farce and melodrama is the same, and quite artistically legitimate, the object of gaining a resounding rapidity of action which subtleties would obstruct.

*Ten*

So we find ourselves faced with a fundamental contrast between what is called fiction and what is called folklore. The one exhibits an abnormal degree of dexterity operating within our daily limitations; the other exhibits quite normal desires extended beyond those limitations. Fiction means the common things as seen by the uncommon people. Fairy tales mean the uncommon things as seen by the common people.

*Eleven*

The only question is whether all terms are useless, or whether one can, with such a phrase, cover a distinct *idea* about the origin of things. I think one can, and so evi-

dently does the evolutionist, or he would not talk about evolution. And the root phrase for all Christian theism was this, that God was a creator, as an artist is a creator. A poet is so separate from his poem, that he himself speaks of it as a little thing he has "thrown off." Even in giving it forth he has flung it away. This principle that all creation and procreation is a breaking off is at least as consistent through the cosmos as the evolutionary principle that all growth is a branching out. A woman loses a child even in having a child. All creation is separation. Birth is as solemn a parting as death.

### *Twelve*

In one sense things are only equal if they are entirely different. Thus, for instance, people talk with a quite astonishing gravity about the inequality or equality of the sexes; as if there could possibly be any inequality between a lock and a key. Wherever there is no element of variety, wherever all the items literally have an identical aim, there is at once and of necessity inequality.

### *Thirteen*

A woman is only inferior to man in the matter of being not so manly; she is inferior in nothing else. Man is inferior to woman in so far as he is not a woman; there is no other reason. And the same applies in some degree to all genuine differences.

### *Fourteen*

It is really difficult to decide when we come to the extreme edge of veracity, when and when not it is permissible to create an illusion. A standing example, for instance, is the case of the fairy tales. We think a father entirely pure and benevolent when he tells his children that a beanstalk grew up into heaven, and a pumpkin turned into a coach. We should consider that he lapsed from purity and benevolence if he told his children that in walking home that evening he had seen a beanstalk grow half-way up the church, or a pumpkin grow as large as a wheelbarrow.

*Fifteen*

My first and last philosophy, that which I believe in with unbroken certainty, I learnt in the nursery. I generally learnt it from a nurse; that is, from the solemn and star-appointed priestess at once of democracy and tradition. The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things. They are not fantasies; compared with them other things are fantastic. Compared with them religion is abnormally right and rationalism abnormally wrong. Fairyland is nothing but the sunny country of common-sense. It is not earth that judges heaven, but heaven that judges earth; so for me at least it was not earth that criticised elfland, but elfland that criticised the earth.

*Sixteen*

Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. Democracy tells us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our groom; tradition asks us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our father.

*Seventeen*

This is the first principle of democracy: that the essential things in men are the things they hold in common, not the things they hold separately. And the second principle is merely this: that the political instinct or desire is one of those things which they hold in common.

*Eighteen*

The love of humanity is a thing supposed to be professed only by vulgar and officious philanthropists, or by saints of a superhuman detachment and universality. As a matter of fact, love of humanity is the commonest and most natural of the feelings of a fresh nature, and almost everyone has felt it alight capriciously upon him when

looking at a crowded park or a room full of dancers. The love of those whom we do not know is quite as eternal a sentiment as the love of those whom we do know.

*Nineteen*

In our friends the richness of life is proved to us by what we have gained; in the faces in the street the richness of life is proved to us by the hint of what we have lost. And this feeling for strange faces and strange lives, when it is felt keenly by a young man, almost always expresses itself in a desire after a kind of vagabond beneficence, a desire to go through the world scattering goodness like a capricious god. It is desired that mankind should hunt in vain for its best friend as it would hunt for a criminal; that he should be an anonymous Saviour, an unrecorded Christ.

*Twenty*

It is when men begin to grow desperate in their love for the people, when they are overwhelmed with the difficulties and blunders of humanity, that they fall back upon a wild desire to manage everything themselves. Their faith in themselves is only a disillusionment with mankind. They are in that most dreadful position, dreadful alike in personal and public affairs—the position of the man who has lost faith and not lost love. This belief that all would go right if we could only get the strings into our own hands is a fallacy almost without exception, but nobody can justly say that it is not public-spirited. The sin and sorrow of despotism is not that it does not love men, but that it loves them too much and trusts them too little.

*Twenty-one*

The tragedy of love is in love, not in marriage. There is no unhappy marriage that might not be an equally unhappy concubinage, or a far more unhappy seduction. Whether the tie be legal or no, matters something to the faithless party; it matters nothing to the faithful one.

*Twenty-two*

Now, one may believe in democracy or disbelieve in it. It would be grossly unfair to conceal the fact that there

are difficulties on both sides. The difficulty of believing in democracy is that it is so hard to believe—like God and most other good things. The difficulty of disbelieving in democracy is that there is nothing else to believe in. I mean there is nothing else on earth or in earthly politics. Unless an aristocracy is selected by gods, it must be selected by men. It may be negatively and passively permitted, but either heaven or humanity must permit it; otherwise it has no more moral authority than a lucky pickpocket. It is baby talk to talk about "Superman" or "Nature's Aristocracy" or "The Wise Few." "The Wise Few" must be either those whom others think wise—who are often fools; or those who think themselves wise—who are always fools.

#### *Twenty-three*

It is common to meet nowadays men who talk of what they call Free Love as if it were something like Free Silver—a new and ingenious political scheme. They seem to forget that it is as easy to judge what it would be like as to judge of what legal marriage would be like. "Free Love" has been going on in every town and village since the beginning of the world; and the first fact that every man of the world knows about it is plain enough. It never does produce any of the wild purity and perfect freedom its friends attribute to it. If any paper had the pluck to head a column "Is Concubinage a Failure?" instead of "Is Marriage a Failure?" the answer "Yes" would be given by the personal memory of many men, and by the historic memory of all.

#### *Twenty-four*

A cosmic philosophy is not constructed to fit a man; a cosmic philosophy is constructed to fit a cosmos. A man can no more possess a private religion than he can possess a private sun and moon.

#### *Twenty-five*

The fact is that purification and austerity are even more necessary for the appreciation of life and laughter than for anything else. To let no bird fly past unnoticed, to spell

patiently the stones and weeds, to have the mind a store-house of sunsets, requires a discipline in pleasure and an education in gratitude.

*Twenty-six*

Variability is one of the virtues of a woman. It obviates the crude requirements of polygamy. If you have one good wife you are sure to have a spiritual harem.

*Twenty-seven*

The face of the King's servants grew greater than the King.

He tricked them and they trapped him and drew round him in a ring;

The new grave lords closed round him that had eaten the abbey's fruits,

And the men of the new religion with their Bibles in their boots,

We saw their shoulders moving to menace and discuss.

And some were pure and some were vile, but none took heed of us;

We saw the King when they killed him, and his face was proud and pale,

And a few men talked of freedom while England talked of ale.

*Twenty-eight*

The French Revolution was at root a thoroughly optimistic thing. It may seem strange to attribute optimism to anything so destructive; but, in truth, this particular kind of optimism is inevitably, and by its nature, destructive. The great dominant idea of the whole of that period, the period before, during, and long after the Revolution, is the idea that man would by his nature live in an Eden of dignity, liberty and love, and that artificial and decrepit systems are keeping him out of that Eden. No one can do the least justice to the great Jacobins who does not realise that to them breaking the civilisation of ages was like breaking the cords of a treasure-chest.

*Twenty-nine*

For the great paradox of morality (the paradox to which only the religious have given an adequate expression) is

that the very vilest kind of fault is exactly the most easy kind. We read in books and ballads about the wild fellow who might kill a man or smoke opium, but who would never stoop to lying or cowardice or to "anything mean." But for actual human beings opium and slaughter have only occasional charm; the permanent human temptation is the temptation to be mean. The one standing probability is the probability of becoming a cowardly hypocrite.

### *Thirty*

The circle of the traitors is the lowest of the abyss, and it is also the easiest to fall into. That is one of the ringing realities of the Bible, that it does not make its great men commit grand sins; it makes its great men (such as David and St Peter) commit small sins and behave like sneaks.

### *Thirty-one*

Aristocracy uses the strong for the service of the weak; slavery uses the weak for the service of the strong.

# November

## *One*

I have known people who protested against religious education with arguments against any education, saying that the child's mind must grow freely or that the old must not teach the young. I have known people who showed that there could be no divine judgment by showing that there can be no human judgment, even for practical purposes. They burned their own corn to set fire to the church; they smashed their own tools to smash it; any stick was good enough to beat it with, though it were the last stick of their own dismembered furniture. We do not admire, we hardly excuse, the fanatic who wrecks this world for love of the other. But what are we to say to the fanatic who wrecks this world out of hatred of the other? He sacrifices the very existence of humanity to the non-existence of God. He offers his victims not to the altar, but merely to assert the idleness of the altar and the emptiness of the throne. He is ready to ruin even that primary ethic by which all things live, for his strange and eternal vengeance upon someone who never lived at all.

## *Two*

And yet the thing hangs in the heavens unhurt. Its opponents only succeed in destroying all that they themselves justly hold dear. They do not destroy orthodoxy; they only destroy political courage and common-sense. They do not prove that Adam was not responsible to God; how could they prove it? They only prove (from their premises) that the Czar is not responsible to Russia. They do not prove that Adam should not have been punished by God; they only prove that the nearest sweater should not be punished by men. With their Oriental doubts about personality they do not make certain that we shall have no personal life hereafter; they only make certain that we shall not have a very jolly or com-

plete one here. With their paralysing hints of all conclusions coming out wrong they do not tear the book of the Recording Angel; they only make it a little harder to keep the books of Marshall & Snelgrove.

*Three*

Not only is the faith the mother of all worldly energies, but its foes are the fathers of all worldly confusion. The secularists have not wrecked divine things; but the secularists have wrecked secular things, if that is any comfort to them. The Titans did not scale heaven; but they laid waste the world.

*Four*

There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feel great.

*Five*

It has often been said, very truly, that religion is the thing that makes the ordinary man feel extraordinary; it is an equally important truth that religion is the thing that makes the extraordinary man feel ordinary.

*Six*

I know where Men can still be found,  
Anger and clamorous accord,  
And virtues growing from the ground,  
And fellowship of beer and board,  
And song, that is a sturdy cord,  
And hope, that is a hardy shrub,  
And goodness, that is God's last word—  
Will someone take me to a pub.?

*Seven*

The English lower classes do not fear the English upper classes in the least; nobody could. They simply and freely and sentimentally worship them. The strength of the aristocracy is not in the aristocracy at all; it is in the slums.

*Eight*

The oligarchic character of the modern English commonwealth does not rest, like many oligarchies, on the cruelty

of the rich to the poor. It does not even rest on the kindness of the rich to the poor. It rests on the perennial and unfailing kindness of the poor to the rich.

*Nine*

We are, as a nation, in the truly extraordinary condition of not knowing our own merits. We have played a great and splendid part in the history of universal thought and sentiment; we have been among the foremost in that eternal and bloodless battle in which the blows do not slay, but create.

*Ten*

In painting and music we are inferior to many other nations; but in literature, science, philosophy, and political eloquence, if history be taken as a whole, we can hold our own with any. But all this vast heritage of intellectual glory is kept from our schoolboys like a heresy; and they are left to live and die, in the dull and infantile type of patriotism which they learn from a box of tin soldiers.

*Eleven*

If a man is genuinely superior to his fellows the first thing that he believes in is the equality of man.

*Twelve*

The first-rate great man is equal with other men, like Shakespeare. The second-rate great man is on his knees to other men, like Whitman. The third-rate great man is superior to other men, like Whistler.

*Thirteen*

When all philosophies shall fail,  
This word alone shall fit;  
That a sage feels too small for life,  
And a fool too large for it.

*Fourteen*

The artistic temperament is a disease that afflicts amateurs. It is a disease which arises from men not having sufficient power of expression to utter and get rid of the element of art in their being. It is healthful to every sane man

to utter the art within him; it is essential to every sane man to get rid of the art within him at all costs. Artists of a large and wholesome vitality get rid of their art easily, as they breathe easily, or perspire easily. But in artists of less force, the thing becomes a pressure, and produces a definite pain, which is called the artistic temperament.

*Fifteen*

When modern sociologists talk of the necessity of accommodating oneself to the trend of the time, they forget that the trend of the time at its best consists entirely of people who will not accommodate themselves to anything. At its worst it consists of many millions of frightened creatures all accommodating themselves to a trend that is not there.

*Sixteen*

And when we come to the end of the world  
For me, I count it fit  
To take the leap like a good river,  
Shot shrieking over it.

*Seventeen*

To the humble man, and to the humble man alone, the sun is really a sun; to the humble man, and to the humble man alone, the sea is really a sea. When he looks at all the faces in the street, he does not only realise that men are alive, he realises with a dramatic pleasure that they are not dead.

*Eighteen*

Bake ye the big world all again  
A cake with kinder leaven;  
Yet these are sorry evermore—  
Unless there be a little door,  
A little door in heaven.

*Nineteen*

I should roughly define the first spirit in Puritanism thus: It was a refusal to contemplate God or goodness with anything lighter or milder than the most fierce concentration of the intellect.

*Twenty*

A Puritan meant originally a man whose mind had no holidays. To use his own favourite phrase, he would let no living thing come between him and his God; an attitude which involved eternal torture for him and a cruel contempt for all the living things. It was better to worship in a barn than in a cathedral, for the specific and specified reason that the cathedral was beautiful.

*Twenty-one*

Physically beauty was a false and sensual symbol coming in between the intellect and the object of its intellectual worship. The human brain ought to be at every instant a consuming fire which burns through all conventional images until they were as transparent as glass.

*Twenty-two*

The pagan set out, with admirable sense, to enjoy himself. By the end of his civilisation he had discovered that a man cannot enjoy himself and continue to enjoy anything else.

*Twenty-three*

There is more simplicity in the man who eats caviare on impulse than in the man who eats grape-nuts on principle.

*Twenty-four*

As the word "unreasonable" is open to misunderstanding, the matter may be more accurately put by saying that each one of these Christian or mystical virtues involves a paradox in its own nature, and that this is not true of any of the typically pagan or rationalist virtues. Justice consists in finding out a certain thing due to a certain man and giving it to him. Temperance consists in finding out the proper limit of a particular indulgence and adhering to that. But charity means pardoning what is unpardonable, or it is no virtue at all. Hope means hoping when things are hopeless, or it is no virtue at all. And faith means believing the incredible, or it is no virtue at all.

*Twenty-five*

Man cannot love mortal things. He can only love immortal things for an instant.

*Twenty-six*

You cannot easily make a good drama out of the success or failure of marriage, just as you could not make a good drama out of the growth of an oak-tree or the decay of an empire. As Polonius very reasonably observed, it is too long.

*Twenty-seven*

A happy love affair will make a drama simply because it is dramatic; it depends on an ultimate yes or no. But a happy marriage is not dramatic; perhaps it would be less happy if it were.

*Twenty-eight*

The essence of a romantic heroine is that she asks herself an intense question; but the essence of a sensible wife is that she is much too sensible to ask herself any questions at all. All the things that make monogamy a success are in their nature undramatic things, the silent growth of an instinctive confidence, the common wounds and victories, the accumulation of customs, the rich maturing of old jokes.

*Twenty-nine*

Sane marriage is an untheatrical thing; it is therefore not surprising that most modern dramatists have devoted themselves to insane marriage.

*Thirty*

Nor shall all iron dooms make dumb  
Men wondering ceaselessly,  
If it be not better to fast for joy  
Than feast for misery.

# December

## *One*

The idea of private property universal but private, the idea of families free but still families, of domesticity democratic but still domestic, of one man one house—this remains the real vision and magnet of mankind. The world may accept something more official and general, less human and intimate. But the world will be like a broken-hearted woman who makes a humdrum marriage because she may not make a happy one; Socialism may be the world's deliverance, but it is not the world's desire.

## *Two*

Human tyranny, like every other human sin, has generally some excuse or at least some temptation. It is further difficulty that the excuse was often originally a respectable one; some devotion to institution or ideals for which some men at least had really been grateful.

## *Three*

The peculiar evil that affects England is that, simply, Englishmen have nothing whatever to do with it.

## *Four*

Mankind has not passed through the Middle Ages. Rather mankind has retreated from the Middle Ages in reaction and rout. The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried.

## *Five*

"Efficiency," of course, is futile for the same reason that "strong men," "will power" and the superman are futile. That is, it is futile because it only deals with actions after they have been performed. It has no philosophy for incidents before they happen; therefore

it has no power of choice. An act can only be successful or unsuccessful when it is over; if it is to begin it must be in the abstract, right or wrong.

*Six*

There is a law written in the darkest of the Books of life and it is this: If you look at a thing nine hundred and ninety-nine times, you are perfectly safe; if you look at it the thousandth, you are in frightful danger of seeing it for the first time.

*Seven*

The Middle Ages were a rational epoch, an age of doctrine. Our age is, at its best, a poetical epoch, an age of prejudice. A doctrine is a definite point; a prejudice is a direction. That an ox may be eaten, while a man should not be eaten, is a doctrine. That as little as possible of anything should be eaten is a prejudice; which is also sometimes called an ideal.

*Eight*

There is no such thing as fighting on the winning side; one fights to find out which is the winning side.

*Nine*

The human "race" has been playing at children's games from the beginning, and will probably do it till the end, which is a nuisance for the few people who grow up. And one of the games to which it is most attached is called "Keep to-morrow dark." . . . The players listen very carefully and respectfully to all that the clever men have to say about what is to happen in the next generation. The players then wait until all the clever men are dead, and bury them nicely. They then go and do something else. That is all. For a race of simple tastes, however, it is great fun.

*Ten*

Man is an uprooted tree. That is the only reason why unconscious nature has ever noticed him. That blind man who, after having the holy touch on his eyes, "saw

men as trees walking," knew what he was talking about. It was a great renewal of youth and renovation of the fairy tale of fact. Men are trees walking. But it is only because they are uprooted trees that they can walk.

*Eleven*

A is an Agnostic dissecting a frog.  
B was a Buddhist who had been a dog.  
C was a Christian, a Christist I mean.  
D was the Dog which the Buddhist had been.  
E is for Ethics that grow upon trees.  
F for St Francis who preached to the fleas.  
G is for God which is easy to spell.  
H is for Haeckel and also for Hell.  
I is for the Ideas now commonly dead.  
J is a Jesuit under the bed.

*Twelve*

K is the letter for Benjamin Kidd,  
The Angels and Devils said don't, but he did.  
L Louis the Ninth who, unlike the Eleventh,  
Was a much better man than King Edward the Seventh.  
M is for Man; by the way, What is Man?  
N is for Nunquam who'll tell if he can.  
O is the Om about which I won't trouble you.  
P for the Pope and P. W. W.  
Q is the Quaker quiescent in quod.  
R is for Reason, a primitive God.

*Thirteen*

S is the Superman, harmless but fat.  
T a Theosophist losing his hat.  
U the Upanishads, clever but slight.  
V is a Virtuous man killing Beit.  
W is for Wesley who banged with his fist.  
X for King Xerxes, a monotheist.  
Y is for You who, depraved as you are,  
Are Lord of Creation and Son of a Star.  
Z Zarathustra who couldn't take stout;  
He made war on the weak and they banged him about.

*Fourteen*

Freedom of speech means practically, in our modern civilisation, that we must only talk about unimportant things. We must not talk about religion, for that is illiteral; we must not talk about bread and cheese, for that is talking shop; we must not talk about death, for that is depressing; we must not talk about birth, for that is indelicate.

*Fifteen*

For a plain, hard-working man the home is not the one tame place in the world of adventure. It is the one wild place in the world of rules and set tasks. The home is the one place where he can put the carpet on the ceiling or the slates on the floor if he wants to.

*Sixteen*

We have not only left undone those things that we ought to have done; but we have even left undone those things that we wanted to do.

*Seventeen*

History does not consist of completed and crumbling ruins; rather it consists of half-built villas abandoned by a bankrupt builder. This world is more like an unfinished suburb than a deserted cemetery.

*Eighteen*

Every form of literary art must be a symbol of some phase of the human spirit; but whereas the phase is, in human life, sufficiently convincing in itself, in art it must have a certain pungency and neatness of form, to compensate for its lack of reality.

*Nineteen*

That it is good for a man to realise that he is "the heir of all the ages" is pretty commonly admitted; it is a less popular but equally important point that it is good for him sometimes to realise that he is not only an ancestor, but an ancestor of primal antiquity; it is good for him to wonder whether he is not a hero, and to experience ennobling doubts as to whether he is not a solar myth.

*Twenty*

Dogmas are often spoken of as if they were signs of the slowness or endurance of the human mind. As a matter of fact, they are marks of mental promptitude and lucid impatience. A man will put his meaning mystically because he cannot waste time in putting it rationally. Dogmas are not dark and mysterious; rather a dogma is like a flash of lightning—an instantaneous lucidity that opens across a whole landscape.

*Twenty-one*

A man should be always tied to his mother's apron strings; he should always have a hold on his childhood, and be ready at intervals to start anew from a childish standpoint. Theologically the thing is best expressed by saying "You must be born again." Secularly it is best expressed by saying "You must keep your birthday." Even if you will not be born again, at least remind yourself occasionally that you were born once.

*Twenty-two*

To the Buddhist or the Eastern fatalist existence is a science or a plan, which must end up in a certain way. But to a Christian existence is a *story*, which may end up in any way. In a thrilling novel (that purely Christian product) the hero is not eaten by cannibals; but it is essential to the existence of the thrill that he *might* be eaten by cannibals. The hero must (so to speak) be an eatable hero. So Christian morals have always said to the man, not that he would lose his soul, but that he must take care that he didn't. In Christian morals, in short, it is wicked to call a man "damned"; but it is strictly religious and philosophic to call him damnable.

*Twenty-three*

It is the custom in our little epoch to sneer at the middle classes. Cockney artists profess to find the bourgeoisie dull; as if artists had any business to find anything dull. Decadents talk contemptuously of its conventions and its set tasks; it never occurs to them that conventions and set tasks are the very way to keep that greenness in the grass and that redness in the roses—which they have lost for ever.

*Twenty-four*

Some stupid people started the idea that because women obviously back up their own people through everything, therefore women are blind and do not see anything. They can hardly have known any women. The same women who are ready to defend their men through thick and thin are (in their personal intercourse with the man) almost morbidly lucid about the thinness of his excuses or the thickness of his head. A man's friend likes him but leaves him as he is: his wife loves him and is always trying to turn him into somebody else. Women who are utter mystics in their creed are utter cynics in their criticism. Thackeray expressed this well when he made Pendennis' mother, who worshipped her son as a god, yet assume that he would go wrong as a man. She underrated his virtue, though she overrated his value. The devotee is entirely free to criticise; the fanatic can safely be a sceptic. Love is not blind; that is the last thing that it is. Love is bound; and the more it is bound the less it is blind.

*Twenty-five*

There fared a mother driven forth  
Out of an inn to roam;  
In the place where she was homeless  
All men are at home.  
The crazy stable, timber, and shifting sand  
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand  
Than the square stones of Rome.  
This world is wild as an old wife's tale,  
And strange the plain things are,  
The earth is enough and the air is enough  
For our wonder and our war;  
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings,  
And our peace is put in impossible things  
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings  
Round an incredible star.

*Twenty-six*

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
(O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast,  
His hair was like a star.  
(O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
(O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.)

The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,  
His hair was like a crown,  
And all the flowers looked up at Him,  
And all the stars looked down.

*Twenty-seven*

Marriage is a fact, an actual human relation like that of motherhood which has certain human habits and loyalties, except in a few monstrous cases, where it is turned to torture by special insanity and sin. A marriage is neither an ecstasy nor a slavery; it is a commonwealth; it is a separate working and fighting thing like a nation.

*Twenty-eight*

Kings and diplomatists talk of "forming alliances" when they make weddings; but indeed every wedding is primarily an alliance. The family is a fact, and a man is part of his wife even when he wishes he wasn't. The twain are one flesh—yes, even when they are not one spirit. Man is duplex. Man is a quadruped.

*Twenty-nine*

There is, of course, no paradox in saying that if we find in a good book a wildly impossible character it is very probable indeed that it was copied from a real person. This is one of the commonplaces of good art criticism. For although people talk of the restraints of fact and the freedom of fiction, the case for most artistic purposes is quite the other way. Nature is as free as air: art is forced to look probable. There may be a million things that do happen, and yet only one thing that convinces us as

likely to happen. Out of a million possible things there may be only one appropriate thing. I fancy, therefore, that many stiff, unconvincing characters are copied from the wild freak-show of real life.

*Thirty*

Pure and exalted atheists talk themselves into believing that the working classes are turning with indignant scorn from the churches. The working classes are not indignant against the churches in the least. The things the working classes really are indignant against are the hospitals. The people has no definite disbelief in the temples of theology. The people has a fiery and practical disbelief in the temples of physical science. The things the poor hate are the modern things, the rationalistic things—doctors, inspectors, poor law guardians, professional philanthropy. They never showed any reluctance to be helped by the old and corrupt monasteries. They will often die rather than be helped by the modern and efficient workhouse.

*Thirty-one*

To-morrow is the Gorgon; a man must only see it mirrored in the shining shield of yesterday. If he sees it directly he is turned to stone. This has been the fate of all those who have really seen fate and futurity as clear and inevitable.



